

William Shakespeare

The Tragedy of Othello
the Moor of Venice

EDITED BY RUSS MCDONALD



PENGUIN BOOKS

Table of Contents

Title Page

Copyright Page

Introduction

The Tragedy of Othello the Moor of Venice

*FOR THE BEST IN PAPERBACKS, LOOK FOR THE
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THE PELICAN SHAKESPEARE GENERAL EDITORS

STEPHEN ORGEL

A. R. BRAUNMULLER





Edmund Kean (1787-1833) as a diabolical Othello, one of his greatest roles. He also played a superlatively villainous Iago, and his final performance in 1833 was as Othello to the Iago of his equally famous son Charles. (Engraving after a drawing by J. W. Gear.)

William Shakespeare

The Tragedy of Othello
the Moor of Venice

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Publisher's Note

IT IS ALMOST half a century since the first volumes of the Pelican Shakespeare appeared under the general editorship of Alfred Harbage. The fact that a new edition, rather than simply a revision, has been undertaken reflects the profound changes textual and critical studies of Shakespeare have undergone in the past twenty years. For the new Pelican series, the texts of the plays and poems have been thoroughly revised in accordance with recent scholarship, and in some cases have been entirely reedited. New introductions and notes have been provided in all the volumes. But the new Shakespeare is also designed as a successor to the original series; the previous editions have been taken into account, and the advice of the previous editors has been solicited where it was feasible to do so.

Certain textual features of the new Pelican Shakespeare should be particularly noted. All lines are numbered that contain a word, phrase, or allusion explained in the glossarial notes. In addition, for convenience, every tenth line is also numbered, in italics when no annotation is indicated. The intrusive and often inaccurate place headings inserted by early editors are omitted (as is becoming standard practice), but for the convenience of those who miss them, an indication of locale now appears as the first item in the annotation of each scene.

In the interest of both elegance and utility, each speech prefix is set in a separate line when the speaker's lines are in verse, except when those words form the second half of a verse line. Thus the verse form of the speech is kept visually intact. What is printed as verse and what is printed as prose has, in general, the authority of the original texts. Departures from the original texts in this regard have only the authority of editorial tradition and the judgment of the Pelican editors; and, in a few instances, are admittedly arbitrary.

The Theatrical World

ECONOMIC REALITIES determined the theatrical world in which Shakespeare's plays were written, performed, and received. For centuries in England, the primary theatrical tradition was nonprofessional. Craft guilds (or "mysteries") provided religious drama - mystery plays - as part of the celebration of religious and civic festivals, and schools and universities staged classical and neoclassical drama in both Latin and English as part of their curricula. In these forms, drama was established and socially acceptable. Professional theater, in contrast, existed on the margins of society. The acting companies were itinerant; playhouses could be any available space - the great halls of the aristocracy, town squares, civic halls, inn yards, fair booths, or open fields - and income was sporadic, dependent on the passing of the hat or on the bounty of local patrons. The actors, moreover, were considered little better than vagabonds, constantly in danger of arrest or expulsion.

In the late 1560s and 1570s, however, English professional theater began to gain respectability. Wealthy aristocrats fond of drama - the Lord Admiral, for example, or the Lord Chamberlain - took acting companies under their protection so that the players technically became members of their households and were no longer subject to arrest as homeless or masterless men. Permanent theaters were first built at this time as well, allowing the companies to control and charge for entry to their performances.

Shakespeare's livelihood, and the stunning artistic explosion in which he participated, depended on pragmatic and architectural effort. Professional theater requires ways to restrict access to its offerings; if it does not, and admission fees cannot be charged, the actors do not get paid, the costumes go to a pawnbroker, and there is no such thing as a professional, ongoing theatrical tradition. The answer to that economic need arrived in the late 1560s and 1570s with the creation of the so-called public or amphitheater playhouse. Recent discoveries indicate that the precursor of the Globe playhouse in London (where Shakespeare's mature plays were presented) and the Rose theater (which presented Christopher Marlowe's plays and some of Shakespeare's earliest ones) was the Red Lion theater of 1567. Archaeological studies of the foundations of the Rose and Globe theaters have revealed that the open-air theater of the 1590s and later was probably a polygonal building with fourteen to twenty or twenty-four sides, multistoried, from 75 to 100 feet in diameter, with a raised, partly covered "thrust" stage that projected into a group of standing patrons, or "groundlings," and a covered gallery, seating up to 2,500 or more (very crowded) spectators.

These theaters might have been about half full on any given day, though the audiences were larger on holidays or when a play was advertised, as old and new were, through printed playbills posted around London. The metropolitan area's late-Tudor, early-Stuart population (circa 1590-1620) has been estimated

at about 150,000 to 250,000. It has been supposed that in the mid-1590s there were about 15,000 spectators per week at the public theaters; thus, as many as 10 percent of the local population went to the theater regularly. Consequently, the theaters' repertoires - the plays available for this experienced and frequent audience - had to change often: in the month between September 15 and October 15, 1595, for instance, the Lord Admiral's Men performed twenty-eight times in eighteen different plays.

Since natural light illuminated the amphitheaters' stages, performances began between noon and two o'clock and ran without a break for two or three hours. They often concluded with a jig, a fencing display, or some other nondramatic exhibition. Weather conditions determined the season for the amphitheaters: plays were performed every day (including Sundays, sometimes, to clerical dismay) except during Lent - the forty days before Easter - or periods of plague, or sometimes during the summer months when law courts were not in session and the most affluent members of the audience were not in London.

To a modern theatergoer, an amphitheater stage like that of the Rose or Globe would appear an unfamiliar mixture of plainness and elaborate decoration. Much of the structure was carved or painted, sometimes to imitate marble; elsewhere, as under the canopy projecting over the stage, to represent the stars and the zodiac. Appropriate painted canvas pictures (of Jerusalem, for example, if the play was set in that city) were apparently hung on the wall behind the acting area, and tragedies were accompanied by black hangings, presumably something like crepe festoons or bunting. Although these theaters did not employ what we would call scenery, early modern spectators saw numerous large props, such as the "bar" at which a prisoner stood during a trial, the "mossy bank" where lovers reclined, an arbor for amorous conversation, a chariot, gallows, tables, trees, beds, thrones, writing desks, and so forth. Audiences might learn a scene's location from a sign (reading "Athens," for example) carried across the stage (as in Bertolt Brecht's twentieth-century productions). Equally captivating (and equally irritating to the theater's enemies) were the rich costumes and personal props the actors used: the most valuable items in the surviving theatrical inventories are the swords, gowns, robes, crowns, and other items worn or carried by the performers.

Magic appealed to Shakespeare's audiences as much as it does to us today, and the theater exploited many deceptive and spectacular devices. A winch in the loft above the stage, called "the heavens," could lower and raise actors playing gods, goddesses, and other supernatural figures to and from the main acting area, just as one or more trap-doors permitted entrances and exits to and from the area, called "hell," beneath the stage. Actors wore elementary makeup such as wigs, false beards, and face paint, and they employed pig's bladders filled with animal blood to make wounds seem more real. They had rudimentary but effective ways of pretending to behead or hang a person. Supernumeraries (stagehands or actors not needed in a particular scene) could make thunder sounds (by shaking a metal sheet or rolling an iron ball down a chute) and show lightning (by blowing inflammable resin through tubes into a flame). Elaborate fireworks enhanced the effects of dragons flying through the air or imitated such celestial phenomena as comets, shooting stars, and multiple

suns. Horses' hoofbeats, bells (located perhaps in the tower above the stage), trumpets and drums, clocks, cannon shots and gunshots, and the like were common sound effects. And the music of viols, cornets, oboes, and recorders was a regular feature of theatrical performances.

For two relatively brief spans, from the late 1570s to 1590 and from 1599 to 1614, the amphitheaters competed with the so-called private, or indoor, theaters, which originated as, or later represented themselves as, educational institutions training boys as singers for church services and court performances. These indoor theaters had two features that were distinct from the amphitheaters': their personnel and their playing spaces. The amphitheaters' adult companies included both adult men, who played the male roles, and boys, who played the female roles; the private, or indoor, theater companies, on the other hand, were entirely composed of boys aged about 8 to 16, who were, or could pretend to be, candidates for singers in a church or a royal boys' choir. (Until 1660, professional theatrical companies included no women.) The playing space would appear much more familiar to modern audiences than the long-vanished amphitheaters; the later indoor theaters were, in fact, the ancestors of the typical modern theater. They were enclosed spaces, usually rectangular, with the stage filling one end of the rectangle and the audience arrayed in seats or benches across (and sometimes lining) the building's longer axis. These spaces staged plays less frequently than the public theaters (perhaps only once a week) and held far fewer spectators than the amphitheaters: about 200 to 600, as opposed to 2,500 or more. Fewer patrons mean a smaller gross income, unless each pays more. Not surprisingly, then, private theaters charged higher prices than the amphitheaters, probably sixpence, as opposed to a penny for the cheapest entry.

Protected from the weather, the indoor theaters presented plays later in the day than the amphitheaters, and used artificial illumination - candles in sconces or candelabra. But candles melt, and need replacing, snuffing, and trimming, and these practical requirements may have been part of the reason the indoor theaters introduced breaks in the performance, the intermission so dear to the heart of theatergoers and to the pocketbooks of theater concessionaires ever since. Whether motivated by the need to tend to the candles or by the entrepreneurs' wishing to sell oranges and liquor, or both, the indoor theaters eventually established the modern convention of the noncontinuous performance. In the early modern "private" theater, musical performances apparently filled the intermissions, which in Stuart theater jargon seem to have been called "acts."

At the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century, the distinction between public amphitheaters and private indoor companies ceased. For various cultural, political, and economic reasons, individual companies gained control of both the public, open-air theaters and the indoor ones, and companies mixing adult men and boys took over the formerly "private" theaters. Despite the death of the boys' companies and of their highly innovative theaters (for which such luminous playwrights as Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston wrote), their playing spaces and conventions had an immense impact on subsequent plays: not merely for the

intervals (which stressed the artistic and architectonic importance of “acts”), but also because they introduced political and social satire as a popular dramatic ingredient, even in tragedy, and a wider range of actorly effects, encouraged by their more intimate playing spaces.

Even the briefest sketch of the Shakespearean theatrical world would be incomplete without some comment on the social and cultural dimensions of theaters and playing in the period. In an intensely hierarchical and status-conscious society, professional actors and their ventures had hardly any respectability; as we have indicated, to protect themselves against laws designed to curb vagabondage and the increase of masterless men, actors resorted to the near-fiction that they were the servants of noble masters, and wore their distinctive livery. Hence the company for which Shakespeare wrote in the 1590s called itself the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and pretended that the public, money-getting performances were in fact rehearsals for private performances before that high court official. From 1598, the Privy Council had licensed theatrical companies, and after 1603, with the accession of King James I, the companies gained explicit royal protection, just as the Queen’s Men had for a time under Queen Elizabeth. The Chamberlain’s Men became the King’s Men, and the other companies were patronized by the other members of the royal family.

These designations were legal fictions that half-concealed an important economic and social development, the evolution away from the theater’s organization on the model of the guild, a self-regulating confraternity of individual artisans, into a proto-capitalist organization. Shakespeare’s company became a joint-stock company, where persons who supplied capital and, in some cases, such as Shakespeare’s, capital and talent, employed themselves and others in earning a return on that capital. This development meant that actors and theater companies were outside both the traditional guild structures, which required some form of civic or royal charter, and the feudal household organization of master-and-servant. This anomalous, maverick social and economic condition made theater companies practically unruly and potentially even dangerous; consequently, numerous official bodies - including the London metropolitan and ecclesiastical authorities as well as, occasionally, the royal court itself - tried, without much success, to control and even to disband them.

Public officials had good reason to want to close the theaters: they were attractive nuisances - they drew often riotous crowds, they were always noisy, and they could be politically offensive and socially insubordinate. Until the Civil War, however, anti-theatrical forces failed to shut down professional theater, for many reasons - limited surveillance and few police powers, tensions or outright hostilities among the agencies that sought to check or channel theatrical activity, and lack of clear policies for control. Another reason must have been the theaters’ undeniable popularity. Curtailing any activity enjoyed by such a substantial percentage of the population was difficult, as various Roman emperors attempting to limit circuses had learned, and the Tudor-Stuart audience was not merely large, it was socially diverse and included women. The prevalence of public entertainment in this period has been underestimated. In fact, fairs, holidays, games, sporting events, the equivalent of modern

parades, freak shows, and street exhibitions all abounded, but the theater was the most widely and frequently available entertainment to which people of every class had access. That fact helps account both for its quantity and for the fear and anger it aroused.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OF STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, GENTLEMAN

Many people have said that we know very little about William Shakespeare's life - pinheads and postcards are often mentioned as appropriately tiny surfaces on which to record the available information. More imaginatively and perhaps more correctly, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Shakespeare is the only biographer of Shakespeare. . . . So far from Shakespeare's being the least known, he is the one person in all modern history fully known to us."

In fact, we know more about Shakespeare's life than we do about almost any other English writer's of his era. His last will and testament (dated March 25, 1616) survives, as do numerous legal contracts and court documents involving Shakespeare as principal or witness, and parish records in Stratford and London. Shakespeare appears quite often in official records of King James's royal court, and of course Shakespeare's name appears on numerous title pages and in the written and recorded words of his literary contemporaries Robert Greene, Henry Chettle, Francis Meres, John Davies of Hereford, Ben Jonson, and many others. Indeed, if we make due allowance for the bloating of modern, run-of-the-mill bureaucratic records, more information has survived over the past four hundred years about William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, than is likely to survive in the next four hundred years about any reader of these words.

What we do not have are entire categories of information - Shakespeare's private letters or diaries, drafts and revisions of poems and plays, critical prefaces or essays, commendatory verse for other writers' works, or instructions guiding his fellow actors in their performances, for instance - that we imagine would help us understand and appreciate his surviving writings. For all we know, many such data never existed as written records. Many literary and theatrical critics, not knowing what might once have existed, more or less cheerfully accept the situation; some even make a theoretical virtue of it by claiming that such data are irrelevant to understanding and interpreting the plays and poems.

So, what do we know about William Shakespeare, the man responsible for thirty-seven or perhaps more plays, more than 150 sonnets, two lengthy narrative poems, and some shorter poems?

While many families by the name of Shakespeare (or some variant spelling) can be identified in the English Midlands as far back as the twelfth century, it seems likely that the dramatist's grandfather, Richard, moved to Snitterfield, a

town not far from Stratford-upon-Avon, sometime before 1529. In Snitterfield, Richard Shakespeare leased farmland from the very wealthy Robert Arden. By 1552, Richard's son John had moved to a large house on Henley Street in Stratford-upon-Avon, the house that stands today as "The Birthplace." In Stratford, John Shakespeare traded as a glover, dealt in wool, and lent money at interest; he also served in a variety of civic posts, including "High Bailiff," the municipality's equivalent of mayor. In 1557, he married Robert Arden's youngest daughter, Mary. Mary and John had four sons - William was the oldest - and four daughters, of whom only Joan outlived her most celebrated sibling. William was baptized (an event entered in the Stratford parish church records) on April 26, 1564, and it has become customary, without any good factual support, to suppose he was born on April 23, which happens to be the feast day of Saint George, patron saint of England, and is also the date on which he died, in 1616. Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway in 1582, when he was eighteen and she was twenty-six; their first child was born five months later. It has been generally assumed that the marriage was enforced and subsequently unhappy, but these are only assumptions; it has been estimated, for instance, that up to one third of Elizabethan brides were pregnant when they married. Anne and William Shakespeare had three children: Susanna, who married a prominent local physician, John Hall; and the twins Hamnet, who died young in 1596, and Judith, who married Thomas Quiney - apparently a rather shady individual. The name Hamnet was unusual but not unique: he and his twin sister were named for their godparents, Shakespeare's neighbors Hamnet and Judith Sadler. Shakespeare's father died in 1601 (the year of *Hamlet*), and Mary Arden Shakespeare died in 1608 (the year of *Coriolanus*). William Shakespeare's last surviving direct descendant was his granddaughter Elizabeth Hall, who died in 1670.

Between the birth of the twins in 1585 and a clear reference to Shakespeare as a practicing London dramatist in Robert Greene's sensationalizing, satiric pamphlet, *Greene's Groatworth of Wit* (1592), there is no record of where William Shakespeare was or what he was doing. These seven so-called lost years have been imaginatively filled by scholars and other students of Shakespeare: some think he traveled to Italy, or fought in the Low Countries, or studied law or medicine, or worked as an apprentice actor/writer, and so on to even more fanciful possibilities. Whatever the biographical facts for those "lost" years, Greene's nasty remarks in 1592 testify to professional envy and to the fact that Shakespeare already had a successful career in London. Speaking to his fellow playwrights, Greene warns both generally and specifically:

... trust them [actors] not: for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.

The passage mimics a line from *3 Henry VI* (hence the play must have been performed before Greene wrote) and seems to say that "Shake-scene" is both actor and playwright, a jack-of-all-trades. That same year, Henry Chettle

protested Greene's remarks in *Kind-Heart's Dream*, and each of the next two years saw the publication of poems - *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, respectively - publicly ascribed to (and dedicated by) Shakespeare. Early in 1595 he was named one of the senior members of a prominent acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, when they received payment for court performances during the 1594 Christmas season.

Clearly, Shakespeare had achieved both success and reputation in London. In 1596, upon Shakespeare's application, the College of Arms granted his father the now-familiar coat of arms he had taken the first steps to obtain almost twenty years before, and in 1598, John's son - now permitted to call himself "gentleman" - took a 10 percent share in the new Globe playhouse. In 1597, he bought a substantial bourgeois house, called New Place, in Stratford - the garden remains, but Shakespeare's house, several times rebuilt, was torn down in 1759 - and over the next few years Shakespeare spent large sums buying land and making other investments in the town and its environs. Though he worked in London, his family remained in Stratford, and he seems always to have considered Stratford the home he would eventually return to. Something approaching a disinterested appreciation of Shakespeare's popular and professional status appears in Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia* (1598), a not especially imaginative and perhaps therefore persuasive record of literary reputations. Reviewing contemporary English writers, Meres lists the titles of many of Shakespeare's plays, including one not now known, *Love's Labor's Won*, and praises his "mellifluous & hony-tongued" "sugred Sonnets," which were then circulating in manuscript (they were first collected in 1609). Meres describes Shakespeare as "one of the best" English playwrights of both comedy and tragedy. In *Remains . . . Concerning Britain* (1605), William Camden - a more authoritative source than the imitative Meres - calls Shakespeare one of the "most pregnant witts of these our times" and joins him with such writers as Chapman, Daniel, Jonson, Marston, and Spenser. During the first decades of the seventeenth century, publishers began to attribute numerous play quartos, including some non-Shakespearean ones, to Shakespeare, either by name or initials, and we may assume that they deemed Shakespeare's name and supposed authorship, true or false, commercially attractive.

For the next ten years or so, various records show Shakespeare's dual career as playwright and man of the theater in London, and as an important local figure in Stratford. In 1608-9 his acting company - designated the "King's Men" soon after King James had succeeded Queen Elizabeth in 1603 - rented, refurbished, and opened a small interior playing space, the Blackfriars theater, in London, and Shakespeare was once again listed as a substantial sharer in the group of proprietors of the playhouse. By May 11, 1612, however, he describes himself as a Stratford resident in a London lawsuit - an indication that he had withdrawn from day-to-day professional activity and returned to the town where he had always had his main financial interests. When Shakespeare bought a substantial residential building in London, the Blackfriars Gatehouse, close to the theater of the same name, on March 10, 1613, he is recorded as William Shakespeare "of Stratford upon Avon in the county of Warwick, gentleman," and he named several London residents as the building's trustees.

Still, he continued to participate in theatrical activity: when the new Earl of Rutland needed an allegorical design to bear as a shield, or *impresa*, at the celebration of King James's Accession Day, March 24, 1613, the earl's accountant recorded a payment of 44 shillings to Shakespeare for the device with its motto.

For the last few years of his life, Shakespeare evidently concentrated his activities in the town of his birth. Most of the final records concern business transactions in Stratford, ending with the notation of his death on April 23, 1616, and burial in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon.

THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

The history of ascribing Shakespeare's plays (the poems do not come up so often) to someone else began, as it continues, peculiarly. The earliest published claim that someone else wrote Shakespeare's plays appeared in an 1856 article by Delia Bacon in the American journal *Putnam's Monthly* - although an Englishman, Thomas Wilmot, had shared his doubts in private (even secretive) conversations with friends near the end of the eighteenth century. Bacon's was a sad personal history that ended in madness and poverty, but the year after her article, she published, with great difficulty and the bemused assistance of Nathaniel Hawthorne (then United States Consul in Liverpool, England), her *Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded*. This huge, ornately written, confusing farrago is almost unreadable; sometimes its intents, to say nothing of its arguments, disappear entirely beneath near-raving, ecstatic writing. Tumbled in with much supposed "philosophy" appear the claims that Francis Bacon (from whom Delia Bacon eventually claimed descent), Walter Raleigh, and several other contemporaries of Shakespeare's had written the plays. The book had little impact except as a ridiculed curiosity.

Once proposed, however, the issue gained momentum among people whose conviction was the greater in proportion to their ignorance of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature, history, and society. Another American amateur, Catherine P. Ashmead Windle, made the next influential contribution to the cause when she published *Report to the British Museum* (1882), wherein she promised to open "the Cipher of Francis Bacon," though what she mostly offers, in the words of S. Schoenbaum, is "demented allegorizing." An entire new cottage industry grew from Windle's suggestion that the texts contain hidden, cryptographically discoverable ciphers - "clues" - to their authorship; and today there are not only books devoted to the putative ciphers, but also pamphlets, journals, and newsletters.

Although Baconians have led the pack of those seeking a substitute Shakespeare, in "*Shakespeare Identified* (1920), J. Thomas Looney became the first published "Oxfordian" when he proposed Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford, as the secret author of Shakespeare's plays. Also for Oxford and his "authorship" there are today dedicated societies, articles, journals, and

books. Less popular candidates - Queen Elizabeth and Christopher Marlowe among them - have had adherents, but the movement seems to have divided into two main contending factions, Baconian and Oxfordian. (For further details on all the candidates for "Shakespeare," see S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, 2nd ed., 1991.)

The Baconians, the Oxfordians, and supporters of other candidates have one trait in common - they are snobs. Every pro-Bacon or pro-Oxford tract sooner or later claims that the historical William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon could not have written the plays because he could not have had the training, the university education, the experience, and indeed the imagination or background their author supposedly possessed. Only a learned genius like Bacon or an aristocrat like Oxford could have written such fine plays. (As it happens, lucky male children of the middle class had access to better education than most aristocrats in Elizabethan England - and Oxford was not particularly well educated.) Shakespeare received in the Stratford grammar school a formal education that would daunt many college graduates today; and popular rival playwrights such as the very learned Ben Jonson and George Chapman, both of whom also lacked university training, achieved great artistic success, without being taken as Bacon or Oxford.

Besides snobbery, one other quality characterizes the authorship controversy: lack of evidence. A great deal of testimony from Shakespeare's time shows that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare's plays and that his contemporaries recognized them as distinctive and distinctly superior. (Some of that contemporary evidence is collected in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols., 1930.) Since that testimony comes from Shakespeare's enemies and theatrical competitors as well as from his co-workers and from the Elizabethan equivalent of literary journalists, it seems unlikely that, if any of these sources had known he was a fraud, they would have failed to record that fact.

Books About Shakespeare's Theater

Useful scholarly studies of theatrical life in Shakespeare's day include: G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (1941-68), and the same author's *The Professions of Dramatist and Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642* (1986); E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (1923); R. A. Foakes, *Illustrations of the English Stage, 1580-1642* (1985); Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 3rd ed. (1992), and the same author's *Play-going in Shakespeare's London*, 2nd ed. (1996); Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors* (1929); Carol Chillington Rutter, ed., *Documents of the Rose Playhouse* (1984).

Books About Shakespeare's Life

The following books provide scholarly, documented accounts of Shakespeare's life: G. E. Bentley, *Shakespeare: A Biographical Handbook* (1961); E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. (1930); S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* (1977); and

Shakespeare's Lives, 2nd ed. (1991), by the same author. Many scholarly editions of Shakespeare's complete works print brief compilations of essential dates and events. References to Shakespeare's works up to 1700 are collected in C. M. Ingleby et al., *The Shakespeare Allusion-Book*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (1932).

The Texts of Shakespeare

AS FAR AS WE KNOW, only one manuscript conceivably in Shakespeare's own hand may (and even this is much disputed) exist: a few pages of a play called *Sir Thomas More*, which apparently was never performed. What we do have, as later readers, performers, scholars, students, are printed texts. The earliest of these survive in two forms: quartos and folios. Quartos (from the Latin for "four") are small books, printed on sheets of paper that were then folded in fours, to make eight double-sided pages. When these were bound together, the result was a squarish, eminently portable volume that sold for the relatively small sum of sixpence (translating in modern terms to about \$5.00). In folios, on the other hand, the sheets are folded only once, in half, producing large, impressive volumes taller than they are wide. This was the format for important works of philosophy, science, theology, and literature (the major precedent for a folio Shakespeare was Ben Jonson's *Works*, 1616). The decision to print the works of a popular playwright in folio is an indication of how far up on the social scale the theatrical profession had come during Shakespeare's lifetime. The Shakespeare folio was an expensive book, selling for between fifteen and eighteen shillings, depending on the binding (in modern terms, from about \$150 to \$180). Twenty Shakespeare plays of the thirty-seven that survive first appeared in quarto, seventeen of which appeared during Shakespeare's lifetime; the rest of the plays are found only in folio.

The First Folio was published in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, and was authorized by his fellow actors, the co-owners of the King's Men. This publication was certainly a mark of the company's enormous respect for Shakespeare; but it was also a way of turning the old plays, most of which were no longer current in the playhouse, into ready money (the folio includes only Shakespeare's plays, not his sonnets or other nondramatic verse). Whatever the motives behind the publication of the folio, the texts it preserves constitute the basis for almost all later editions of the playwright's works. The texts, however, differ from those of the earlier quartos, sometimes in minor respects but often significantly - most strikingly in the two texts of *King Lear*, but also in important ways in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. (The variants are recorded in the textual notes to each play in the new Pelican series.) The differences in these texts represent, in a sense, the essence of theater: the texts of plays were initially not intended for publication. They were scripts, designed for the actors to perform - the principal life of the play at this period was in performance. And it follows that in Shakespeare's theater the playwright typically had no say either in how his play was performed or in the disposition of his text - he was an employee of the company. The authoritative figures in the theatrical enterprise were the shareholders in the company, who were for the most part the major actors. They decided what plays were to be done; they hired the playwright and often gave him an outline of the play they wanted him to write. Often, too, the play was a collaboration: the company would retain a group of

writers, and parcel out the scenes among them. The resulting script was then the property of the company, and the actors would revise it as they saw fit during the course of putting it on stage. The resulting text belonged to the company. The playwright had no rights in it once he had been paid. (This system survives largely intact in the movie industry, and most of the playwrights of Shakespeare's time were as anonymous as most screenwriters are today.) The script could also, of course, continue to change as the tastes of audiences and the requirements of the actors changed. Many - perhaps most - plays were revised when they were reintroduced after any substantial absence from the repertory, or when they were performed by a company different from the one that originally commissioned the play.

Shakespeare was an exceptional figure in this world because he was not only a shareholder and actor in his company, but also its leading playwright - he was literally his own boss. He had, moreover, little interest in the publication of his plays, and even those that appeared during his lifetime with the authorization of the company show no signs of any editorial concern on the part of the author. Theater was, for Shakespeare, a fluid and supremely responsive medium - the very opposite of the great classic canonical text that has embodied his works since 1623.

The very fluidity of the original texts, however, has meant that Shakespeare has always had to be edited. Here is an example of how problematic the editorial project inevitably is, a passage from the most famous speech in *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet's balcony soliloquy beginning "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" Since the eighteenth century, the standard modern text has read,

What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.
(II.2.40-44)

Editors have three early texts of this play to work from, two quarto texts and the folio. Here is how the First Quarto (1597) reads:

Whats Montagne? It is nor band nor foote,
Nor arme, nor face, nor any other part.
Whats in a name ? That which we call a Rofoe,
By any other name would smell as sweet:

Here is the Second Quarto (1599):

Whats Mountague ? it is nor hand nor foote,
Nor arme nor face, ô be fome other name
Belonging to a man.
Whats in a name that which we call a rose,
By any other word would smell as sweete,

And here is the First Folio (1623):

There is in fact no early text that reads as our modern text does - and this is the most famous speech in the play. Instead, we have three quite different texts, all of which are clearly some version of the same speech, but none of which seems to us a final or satisfactory version. The transcendently beautiful passage in modern editions is an editorial invention: editors have succeeded in conflating and revising the three versions into something we recognize as great poetry. Is this what Shakespeare “really” wrote? Who can say? What we can say is that Shakespeare always had performance, not a book, in mind.

Books About the Shakespeare Texts

The standard study of the printing history of the First Folio is W. W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio* (1955). J. K. Walton, *The Quarto Copy for the First Folio of Shakespeare* (1971), is a useful survey of the relation of the quartos to the folio. The second edition of Charlton Hinman’s *Norton Facsimile of the First Folio* (1996), with a new introduction by Peter Blayney, is indispensable. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, keyed to the Oxford text, gives a comprehensive survey of the editorial situation for all the plays and poems.

THE GENERAL EDITORS

Introduction

WHY HAS *OTHELLO* always stood slightly apart from the other tragedies generally acknowledged to be among Shakespeare's supreme achievements? Regularly grouped with *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, it is sometimes described as the most dramatic, the most playable, of the great tragedies, but such praise often masks a dubious assessment of its artistic status. Even those who most admire it, however, agree that *Othello* exhibits distinctive qualities that separate it from its dramatic kin. First, its title character is different. The Moor of Venice differs conspicuously from the other tragic heroes, differs from the English audience for which he was created, differs from the rest of the cast of *Othello*. The playwright takes pains to depict Othello as the alien whose strangeness is both fascinating and threatening. Second, the play's subject is unusual for tragedy, neither a struggle for control of the state nor a study of ancient heroism nor royal biography. Rather, *Othello* is about love - its beauty, its fragility, its vulnerability to hate. The passions represented seem private or perhaps narrow, not historically momentous. Here the battle for power is domestic, emotional, and personal.

George Bernard Shaw, commenting on Verdi's operatic version, mischievously remarked that "instead of *Otello* being an Italian opera written in the style of Shakespeare, *Othello* is a play written by Shakespeare in the style of Italian opera. It is quite peculiar among his works in this respect . . . and the plot is a pure farce plot." Shaw's flippant analysis is not atypical. Othello and *Othello* are distinctive in having earned the condescension, even scorn, of certain eloquent critics, from Thomas Rymer in the seventeenth century to F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot in the twentieth. Rymer belittled the play's pretensions to tragic grandeur, lampooning it as a sign of what happens when "Maidens of quality . . . run away with Blackamoors." Eliot pitilessly complained that in the final, lyrical speech before his suicide Othello was "thinking about himself," "endeavouring to escape reality," and merely "cheering himself up."

It is doubtful that such reactions would have surprised the playwright. Shakespeare must have known that audiences would find his exotic hero unsettling, and he must have wanted it that way. So many of his dramatic choices in *Othello* seem original or surprising that they imply a deliberate effort to frustrate the expectations of the audience. All tragedy, of course, depends upon the confounding of expectation, and playwrights from Aeschylus forward have prized and magnified the ironies of a spectacular reversal of fortune. But in choosing and adapting a short story about a foolish captain who murders his wife, a tale first published in Italian by Giraldo Cinthio in 1565, Shakespeare has repeatedly made the difficult, the original choice. In the nature of his hero, the presentation of his villain, the addition and deepening of the minor figures, the pace of the action, the metadramatic layering, the risky reference to the staples of comedy - in each of these important respects, as in lesser ones, he has sought the unexpected effect. Examined in theatrical and historical context,

Othello emerges as the product of an artistic imagination enlarging the boundaries of the theatrical medium, overturning conventions but using the spectator's familiarity with those conventions to intensify the force of their rejection. And placed in the context of its creator's career, the play becomes a skeptical review of his own ten-year commitment to the affirmations of comedy and the benefits of theatrical illusion.

Discussion of tragedy often begins with a treatment of the hero, and here such a procedure is especially appropriate because the play seems to demand immediate attention to its characters. For the twenty-first-century reader or playgoer, particularly in America, the problem of race is likely to be the primary consideration. This is a normal response, since every perceiver brings to every work of art a distinctive set of cultural determinants, an internalized batch of assumptions, opinions, blind spots, and wishes. That personal response should not be dismissed, since readers today cannot ignore the cultural centrality of race and its associated social and moral problems - slavery, oppression, intolerance, resentment, prejudice, and class conflict. Present concerns should be supplemented, however, with an awareness of the theatrical, historical, and cultural conditions obtaining when the play was written and first performed. To do so is not to suppress our own reactions or to minimize the play's relevance to current social or ethical issues. It is, rather, to understand our own reactions better by examining what the work might have meant to an earlier, different generation of people. Absorbing the prominent strain of black and white imagery in the text, our consciousness of race probably prompts us to think of the title character as an African, specifically a sub-Saharan African. This is how he is usually played in the modern theater. To the audience at the Globe, however, *Othello's* origins and appearance were probably less definite.

The Tragedy of Othello the Moor of Venice. It is worth pondering the distinctive mixture of associations the folio title would have ignited in the early modern mind. "Othello" is an unusual name, apparently a Shakespearean coinage (his counterpart in the source is unnamed). It sounds exotic or at least Mediterranean, deriving perhaps from an existing Italian name, "Otello," and (perhaps also) suggesting the North African "Otho" or "Othoman" or "Ottoman." Even stranger is the combination of locative nouns that follows the name, suggesting inconsistency, hybridity, the crossing of cultures. To begin with "Moor," the *Oxford English Dictionary* is of some help. In the ancient world, a Moor was

a native of Mauretania, a region of Northern Africa corresponding to parts of Morocco and Algeria. In later times, one belonging to the people of mixed Berber and Arab race, Muslim in religion, who constitute the bulk of the population of North-western Africa, and who in the 8th c. conquered Spain. In the Middle Ages, and as late as the 17th c., the Moors were commonly supposed to be mostly black or very swarthy (though the existence of "white Moors" was recognized), and hence the word was often used for "negro"; cf. BLACKAMoor.

Clearly the noun has meant different things to different people in different cultures at different times. The disparity between fact and opinion ("commonly

supposed”) is implicit here, even the disparity between opinions (“commonly supposed to be mostly black . . . though the existence of ‘white Moors’ was recognized”). When Iago disparages Othello as “a Barbary horse,” he identifies him with the North African Muslim nation of Barbary, home of the Berbers. But the Moor has left his homeland and is now employed by the Duke of Venice, a city with a definite reputation in the seventeenth century. Venice was a hybrid, a metropolis on the Italian peninsula and yet a separate republic with widespread economic interests; unquestionably it was one of the centers of European civilization. Yet various texts of the period (e.g., Ben Jonson’s *Volpone*) attest to the English opinion of Venice as dangerous and alluring, and indeed throughout the world the city was famous for its courtesans, its sophistication and potential treachery, its mystery. Shakespeare’s Venetian senators are nobody’s fools - they instantly penetrate the Turks’ nautical trick (I.3) - and Iago, when he impugns Desdemona’s fidelity, summons up images of the notoriously duplicitous Venetian female. The sum of these conflicting signals is that none of the nouns in the title - not even “Tragedy” - is stable or plain in its signification.

Was Shakespeare’s Othello black? The question itself demands interrogation, specifically the word “black.” In twenty-first-century terms, the answer is “no.” Othello was first acted by Richard Burbage, the principal tragedian of the King’s Men, who played Richard III and probably Hamlet; he is unlikely to have resembled what would today be considered an African. But in early modern terms, the answer could be some form of “yes.” The Elizabethan ideal of human beauty was what was called “fair,” meaning light skin and either light brown or blond hair. Its opposite, the brunet, or person with darker skin or black hair, was known as “black” or “dark.” Desdemona distinguishes, in her banter with Iago upon landing at Cyprus, between the “fair” (or blond) woman and the “black” (or dark) woman. Such definitions are also pertinent to the identity of the “Dark Lady” of Shakespeare’s sonnets, “a woman colored ill” (Sonnet 144). In other words, Burbage’s physical appearance may have been sufficiently “dark” or “black” to prompt, or at least to correspond to, the trait’s development in Shakespeare’s text.

Throughout the first scene Iago and Roderigo trade racist insults about Othello: “thick-lips,” “lascivious Moor,” “old black ram,” “Barbary horse.” But since these epithets proceed from hatred, which tends to foster caricature, they are not reliable guides to appearance. Burbage might have worn cork makeup to appear swarthy or ostensibly African: at court in 1605, Queen Anne and her ladies applied burnt cork to their faces and forearms when they performed in Jonson’s *Masque of Blackness*. The question of this Moor’s identity is further muddled by the matter of dress: since the London theater companies were known for impressive costumes, we might suppose that robes or other distinctive clothing might have been used to suggest Othello’s lineage. But it is just as likely, given his profession, that Othello was dressed as a Venetian general. Or, considering the sketchy evidence about costuming on the early modern stage, Burbage’s Moor may also have looked something like a Londoner, in doublet and hose. All of these qualifications and inconsistencies suggest that we cannot know exactly what Shakespeare’s audience would have

assumed about Othello's race.

In fact, we cannot know what Shakespeare's audience thought about the question of "race" at all. Categories of nationality and ethnicity in Shakespeare's England seem to have been more fluid than we are inclined to think or at least not to have existed in the relatively definite forms that obtain today. People recognized different racial characteristics and national types, of course, and these were often the source of prejudice. Queen Elizabeth signed a proclamation to deport some eighty-nine "Negroes and Blackamoors," at least partly because they were taking work away from native-born Englishmen: the text of the order refers repeatedly to "people of that kind." Othello's "kind" is entangled with the similarly complex matter of social station. Shakespeare has taken pains to emphasize the Moor's aristocratic roots - "I fetch my life and being / From men of royal siege [rank]" (I.2.21-22) - to insist that in global terms his status is no less exalted than that of Desdemona and her father. The effectiveness of his effort is illustrated in the writing of Charles Gildon, a critic who in 1694 published a passionate refutation of Thomas Rymer's bigoted analysis:

There is no reason in the nature of things why a *Negro* of equal Birth and Merit should not be on an equal bottom with a *German*, *Hollander*, *French-man*, &c. . . . *Othello* being of *Royal Blood* and a Christian, where is the disparity of the Match? If either side is advanc'd, 'tis *Desdemona*.

Gildon's views on race and intermarriage, probably not what we would expect from a late-seventeenth-century Englishman, attest to the difficulty of safely generalizing about early modern audiences' responses to Othello.

We may confidently declare, however, that a Moor was not an obvious choice as the hero of a tragedy circa 1604. Many Londoners had seen Africans in their city, owing to increased commerce with the southern hemisphere and the West Indies, and Elizabeth received an ambassador and his retinue from the King of Barbary in 1600 and 1601. This envoy may even have seen the performances by the Lord Chamberlain's Men at court during his stay; more to the point, they (and their principal playwright) may have seen him. Many Londoners had seen Moors on the stage in the 1590s, notably in plays by George Peele and Christopher Marlowe, and in the collaborative *Lust's Dominion* (1600). Shakespeare himself had already depicted two. In *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron is the wicked accomplice of Tamora, vicious Queen of the Goths; to the Elizabethan spectator, the darkness of his skin denoted the impurity of his soul. The physical appearance of the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice* is not so explicitly described, although Portia sends him away with a swipe at his "complexion." As a rule Elizabethan playwrights employed their Moorish characters as manifestations of the Other, strangers or aliens whose obvious physical difference raised disturbing questions about community and nationhood, cultural difference, and unarticulated assumptions about social organization. In *The Merchant of Venice* the alien status of the Moroccan prince is matched by that of his Aragonian counterpart - in the 1590s Spaniards were often depicted as demonic - and by one of Shakespeare's most memorable and troubling outsiders, Shylock the Jew. These theatrical predecessors can often

evoke derision, occasionally scorn, and sometimes even sympathy and respect from other characters and from the audience, but none displays the kind of charisma or invites exactly the degree of admiration that Othello inspires. The meaningful hybridity latent in the phrase "The Moor of Venice" is reflected in Othello's status as both stranger and hero.

This product of Shakespeare's audacity is one of the most original and enigmatic characters in world drama. Othello is a man of extremes, an African prince who has spent his life in "the tented field," without a permanent home. Now commissioned to lead the forces of Venice, Othello protects the republic's interests from the "Turks," the barbarians with whom he himself is identified by his enemies and, probably, by a portion of the audience. Early-seventeenth-century Europeans thought of Moors, Turks, and Africans as pagan, but Othello is a Christian, a baptized convert whose Christianity is an important marker of his assimilation into Venice and the values of "civilization." In his marriage to Desdemona, he has traded independence and the masculine realm of the battlefield for emotional commitment and feminine companionship. Accustomed to "feats of broils and battle," Othello is an alien in this realm of domesticity, and Iago will exploit his naïveté and diffidence about marriage and women generally. At the beginning of Act Two, the Venetians' sophisticated courtesies and badinage would seem to be predicated on Othello's absence. As soon as his ship lands at Cyprus, the verbal register changes drastically, from Cassio's praise of Desdemona as "a maid / That paragons description and wild fame" (II.1.61-62) to Othello's "O my fair warrior!" (181). The theatrical milieu further complicates the portrait, in that audiences are asked to reconcile the foreign and the familiar. At the first performances this manifestation of the Other was acted by the most famous tragedian in England, and *Othello* is rarely produced without a major player to take the title part. The strangeness of the character may distance us, but at the same time we are attracted by Othello's undeniable star quality.

All these incongruities are consistent with the conventions of tragedy. The tragic figure is usually constructed according to a paradox, as we know from *King Lear* - the king who is also a fool - and from *Hamlet* - the brilliant student for whom intelligence proves fatal. For centuries tragic playwrights have created powerful, charismatic men and women whose uncompromising faith in themselves is coupled with an indomitable will. They are devoted to their own subjective vision of the world and their place in it, and this commitment, reinforced by pride or what the Greeks called hubris, bestows upon them both great strength and great vulnerability. Antigone, with her unwavering moral resolution, *will* see her brother buried even at the cost of her own life. Oedipus *will* cleanse Thebes by finding and punishing the murderer within the gates. Tragic figures may be described as idealists, adhering to an elevated standard of conduct both admirable and impossible to sustain, and expecting such commitment from those around them. Always these men and women are absolutists, unwilling to bend their principles. As Helen Gardner puts it, "the tragic hero usurps the function of the gods and attempts to remake the world."¹

Othello's distinctive vision is both a product and a guarantor of his military career: he is the veteran leader impatient with failure, unwilling to waver

between alternatives, accustomed to seeing things - the pun is unavoidable in this play - in terms of black and white. Uncertainty has no place in his world; indeed, to a military man, it is potentially fatal. Thus his rhetorical ploy before the Senate, "little of this great world can I speak" (I.3.86), is, ironically, fatally true. Like Hamlet, like Lear, he is an innocent. But the simplicity of Othello's construction of reality, his Platonic sense of good and evil - "men should be what they seem" (III.3.128), and his intuitive, martial code of action should not obscure his exceptionally fertile and sensitive imagination. This imaginative gift is one source of his charisma. It underwrites his narrative and rhetorical success, in that he knows what will impress his listeners, from Brabantio and Desdemona in their initial meetings, to his senatorial judges, to the crowd of onlookers at the tragic conclusion. He imagines and wills himself into a world of nobility and integrity, an ideal realm in which officers do not fail in their duty, wives do not misplace love tokens, evil can be recognized, attacked, and destroyed.

Othello's heroic status is conveyed chiefly by his rhetoric, a style of speech aptly called "the Othello music."² No one else in the play (or in any other play) speaks the way Othello does. His language is extravagant and exotic; it is the vehicle for conveying the narrative of his colorful, romantic past; it is the source of his personal attraction, the instrument that wins Desdemona's heart and assures his triumph over Brabantio before the signory. Although Othello professes ignorance of the subtleties of oratory - "Rude am I in my speech" (I.3.81) - that claim is a performative tactic. His defense of his marriage (I.3.76-170) is poetic, stirring, and rhetorically dazzling, a narrative of a narrative of narratives. Othello tells the senators (and the audience) the story of his telling Desdemona the stories of his life, and the romantic, beguiling style is built with the staples of poetry: colorful imagery ("tented field," "deserts idle"); poetic patterns founded on doubled consonants and vowels ("sold to slavery," "hills whose heads touch heaven"); repeated words, often at the beginning of lines ("of most disastrous chances, / Of moving accidents . . . Of hairbreadth escapes . . . Of being taken by the insolent foe"; "She gave . . . She swore . . . She wished . . . She thanked . . . She loved"); seductive rhythms grounded in repetition and formal balance ("Her father loved me, oft invited me, / Still questioned me the story of my life / From year to year"); exotic diction ("anthropophagi"). The speech comes to rest on a pair of gracefully poised lines, a sentence in which the symmetrical rhetoric captures the sympathy between the lovers and forbids objection: "She loved me for the dangers I had passed, / And I loved her that she did pity them." The Moor belongs in a very small class of extraordinary, distinctive speakers, including Falstaff, Hamlet, Macbeth, Cleopatra, and perhaps Coriolanus.

Othello's command of such expressive gifts not only makes him charismatic but also signifies extraordinary imaginative reach. In first greeting Desdemona on Cyprus, he sets their joyous reunion in a context of passion and fatal risk: "If after every tempest come such calms, / May the winds blow till they have wakened death!" (II.1.184- 85). Such extremity characterizes the great aria in which Othello imagines Desdemona's infidelity as the immediate undoing of his world: "O, now forever / Farewell the tranquil mind!" (III.3.347-48). The

soaring lament draws its poetic energy from its colorful images, the rhythms of reiterated words, the musical echo of repeated vowels, and other verbal patterns typical of this famously compelling voice. Audible through the middle of the third act, this heroic register serves as the benchmark for measuring the hero's tragic collapse, as we hear his language degenerate into the vulgar, misogynist, and even bestial style of Iago. The poetic extravagance sounds again in the last scene, now shaded with a cosmic despair: "Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur! / Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!" (V.2.280-81). Relying on such flamboyant rhetoric to make his earthly exit, he conjures up "Arabian trees," "Their medicinale gum," and, "in Aleppo once, . . . a malignant and a turbaned Turk" (V.2.350-53). The powerful beauty of Othello's language is Shakespeare's instrument for delineating the contours of his heroic persona - courage, integrity, professional confidence, absolute commitment to duty, sacred faith in his wife. "Perdition catch my soul / But I do love thee! and when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again" (III.3.90-92): the patterns of those three lines reveal the connection between the exalted speech and the radically simplified conception of fidelity and love.

His verbal authority and charisma permit Othello to compete with his antagonist for theatrical authority. Iago is Shakespeare's third longest role, behind Hamlet and Richard III, and except for the eleven-line "scene" in which a herald reads a proclamation and the few private moments when Desdemona and Emilia prepare for bed, Iago is onstage in every scene. The role of Othello, while not so lengthy, still has more lines than any other of Shakespeare's tragic heroes except (again) Hamlet. The two major women's roles are distinctive and memorable also, and even Cassio appears in all but three scenes. This enumeration of lines and entrances helps to establish a major structural principle: Shakespeare has concentrated the audience's attention on these major figures, permitting no diversion or escape but requiring unrelieved scrutiny of this core group of characters. We come to know them as complex dramatic persons, but through them we are also allowed access to a realm beyond character. As Verdi put it in a letter written while he entertained the offer to compose *Otello*, "It is quite possible that [Shakespeare] might have come across a Falstaff of some kind; but it's most unlikely that he ever met a villain quite so villainous as Iago, and he could never have met women as angelic as Cordelia, Imogen, or Desdemona, etc. Yet they are so true."³ As Verdi perceived, Shakespeare's Iago and Desdemona are so theatrically potent because they are carefully observed persons ("so true") who at the same time stand symbolically for something beyond themselves ("villainous" / "angelic"). The composer's remarks also identify the antithetical method to which Shakespeare always subscribes, as well as the form of antithesis specific to this play, the contest between hell and heaven for the soul of the hero.

The symbolic method is epitomized in the two contestants struggling for possession of Othello: Iago and Desdemona. When *Othello* was first performed, the Tudor morality plays were still attracting English audiences (although in London they had mostly been superseded by more sophisticated fare), and those plays feature the temptation of the hero by two competing angels, the good and bad, or an angel and a devil. No doubt recalling Christopher

Marlowe's evocation of the morality tradition a decade earlier, when a good angel and a bad angel counsel Doctor Faustus, Shakespeare explicitly associates his villain and heroine with this theatrical pattern. The plot takes the form of a *psychomachia*, a battle between angelic and demonic forces for spiritual control of the main character. Othello stands between his ensign ("ancient") and his wife; he moves, during the course of the third act, from Desdemona to Iago, from heaven to hell, from faith to depravity. In representing this movement the poet develops a network of terms and images that sustains our awareness of hell and demons, of a spiritually charged cosmic struggle. The word "heaven" is heard with exceptional frequency (although in some cases in the folio text it serves as a euphemism for the censored "God"). "Hell" (or some form of it) sounds more frequently in *Othello* than in any other play, and if, as may be the case, Shakespeare's actors pronounced the title character's name as "Ot-Hello," the demonic noun reverberates even more frequently and meaningfully.

The horrified onlookers recognize Iago as a demonic figure, a "hellish villain," at the play's end, but from the beginning Shakespeare depicts his methods as infernal, largely by means of the character's diction. In one of his first speeches Iago presents himself as a kind of anti-Creator, negating the biblical Yahweh's "I am what I am" in his "I am not what I am" (I.1.64). Iago ensnares Cassio with the aid of alcohol, personified several times as a "devil" that poisons the brain, and he intoxicates Othello's imagination by "pour[ing] . . . pestilence into his ear" (II.3.344). His sermon to the shamed Cassio is "Divinity of hell!" (II.3.338). The most striking manifestation of a demonic nature is Iago's profound hatred, a negative energy that expresses itself variously as envy, cynicism, and misogyny. In lecturing Roderigo on the need for self-restraint, he espouses a doctrine of fierce naturalism, reducing all human experience to the physical, the mechanistic. As he sings in the drinking song, "man's life's but a span" (II.3.67). Women in general are animalistic ("wildcats"); Venetian women in particular are deceitful and sexually voracious. Othello, like all Southern foreigners, is "changeable," "an erring barbarian." To Iago's ear the "Othello music" is no more than "bombast circumstance" (padded rhetoric) and "fantastical lies." Emotion and romantic sentiment he dismisses as ridiculous. The act of love, entirely without spiritual dimension, is merely bestial: "a lust of the blood and permission of the will," "the beast with two backs." Reason is the key to sanity and balance, says the sociopath.

As compelling as Iago is, Shakespeare gives him a worthy counterpart in Desdemona. Theatrically and tonally, her femininity makes her especially welcome in a play about soldiers in a military outpost. Her open simplicity counterbalances Iago's concealed perversion. This innocence appears in her candor before the Venetian Senate, when she politely but firmly defies her father and frankly confesses her physical and emotional attachment to her husband. It is most apparent in her naive pleading for Cassio. Shakespeare emphasizes her otherworldly purity by lingering over the bedtime chat between the two women (IV.3.10-104), a conversation in which Desdemona is shocked at Emilia's cavalier sexual code. Her unshakable devotion to her murderous husband, especially her effort to exonerate him by blaming herself with her last

breath, has left many readers and spectators incredulous. But such unworldly innocence is a necessary pole in the symbolic structure of the play. Othello's "fair warrior" of Act Two becomes his "fair devil" of Act Three and then "false as hell" in Act Four. In the end, although the victory of evil is not total - Iago will be punished - the embodiment of good, the "heavenly true" Desdemona, lies mute and lifeless. The annihilation of such purity is a source of the play's tremendous emotional power, the effect that led Dr. Johnson to declare, "I am glad that I have ended my revisal of this dreadful scene. It is not to be endured."⁴

The clarity of Shakespeare's dramatic oppositions should not, however, blind us to the subtlety with which his characters are drawn. Onstage Iago's cloven foot is concealed, and Desdemona's halo a little tarnished. For one or two fleeting moments we are invited to feel Iago's pain at Othello's professional rejection of him: the hardworking veteran has been passed over in favor of the college boy. But most of the time his villainy is glaringly obvious to us and invisible to the rest of the cast. They see something quite different. "Honest Iago": Othello uses the epithet ten times, Cassio twice, and Desdemona once. Each of these references delivers an excruciating ironic charge, and a precondition of such an ironic effect is that the term be spoken innocently, without a hint of irony. To those around him, Iago is the blunt, reliable soldier, the helpful fellow to whom people routinely turn in time of crisis. Roderigo, Cassio, Desdemona, and Othello all confide in him and seek his aid. In Act Four, Iago prudently rebuffs Lodovico's confidential query at Othello's rage, as if to preserve his reputation for discretion: "It is not honesty in me to speak / What I have seen and known" (IV.1.271- 72). The amount of time we spend alone with Iago, the privileged view we get of his diseased mind, is calculated to repel us, and morally we are repelled; but such intimacy nevertheless creates an ironic affinity between villain and audience. Shakespeare links us to his villain by modifying the method developed for Richard III, and this theatrical attachment secures an intellectual bond that ensures complicity.

Shakespeare's presentation of Desdemona is just as complex and unusual. Innocent victim though she be, she is also a strong-willed, independent young woman, one who commands all the forms of courtliness and social repartee. But while it may pain us to admit it, this heroine is capable of surprising insensitivity, even hardheadedness. Having resolved to plead for the dismissed Cassio and to help restore him to Othello's favor, Desdemona neglects such vital conditions as context, timing, and reception. Or to put it less flatteringly, she makes herself into something of a pest. Despite her husband's reluctance and his manifest attempts at polite evasion - "Not now, sweet Desdemona; some other time. . . . No, not tonight" (III.3.55-57) - she perseveres in demanding to know when Othello will receive Cassio and hear his apology. That request, as she artlessly observes, is as much a favor to Othello as it is to Cassio, and yet in the tragic environment such innocent persistence, as Iago knows, is self-destructive and potentially fatal. Her oblivious innocence makes itself heard when, after Othello's brutal accusations, she unwittingly undermines her own purity of mind with an unconscious pun: "I cannot say 'whore.' / It does abhor me now I speak the word" (IV.2.161-62). As Iago admits, devils are adept at

arranging “heavenly shows,” and by the same ironic token it seems impossible that a poet with Shakespeare’s ear, taking the name of his heroine from Cinthio’s “Disdemona,” failed to note the “demon” lurking in “the divine Desdemona.”

This shading of character extends to the rest of the cast. The good-looking and fortunate Cassio not only has a weak head for wine, but the *veritas* released by the *vinum* discloses an unlovely vanity and arrogance about his rank, particularly a sense of entitlement. Even the gullible Roderigo attracts a moment of sympathy in his ignominious death. Emilia boldly defends Desdemona at the cost of her own life, but she is tainted by her lie about the handkerchief. Her defense of female desire and denunciation of masculine cruelty are exceedingly welcome when they finally come (IV.3), and yet she declares herself amenable to adultery under the right circumstances. Emilia’s casual attitude toward infidelity helps also to complicate the character of the third woman in the cast. Although Iago calls Bianca a “whore,” she seems to dote wholeheartedly on Cassio, and the significance of her name (*bianca* = white) not only complicates our reading of her character but enriches the imagistic texture of the play. When she protests to Emilia that she is “no strumpet, but of life as honest / As you that thus abuse me” (V.1.123-24), there may be some justice to the claim, given that we have just heard Emilia say she would sell her body for the right price. As the main plot makes clear, hasty judgments about who is a whore can be fatal.

The struggle for Othello’s soul is swift and horrific, confined to a single dramatic unit known as the “Temptation Scene” (III.3). In the space of some 450 lines Iago pollutes Othello’s imagination, separates him psychologically from his wife, and ensnares the hero’s soul. Logic insists that the reversal is too fast, that Othello’s surrender to jealous vengeance is not prepared, that such a change of heart in so short a time is impossible. Further, it may strike us as preposterous, as it did Rymer in the seventeenth century, that the fate of Desdemona should hang on something as trivial as a handkerchief, albeit a magical one. These would seem to be pitfalls that any novice in a creative writing course would have the sense to avoid. So rather than assume that Shakespeare didn’t notice them, we should recognize that he courted such improbabilities, that he risked telling the story this way because speed and incredulity intensify the horrifying effect of the tragic turn. Critics long ago observed that he conceals the logical impossibilities of his plot by employing a double time scheme in *Othello*. The Venetians disembark at Cyprus during the day on Saturday, and Desdemona dies on Sunday night. By such a reckoning “a thousand” acts of sexual infidelity would seem unlikely. Yet Shakespeare condenses Othello’s undoing into a single implausible episode so as to increase its affective power and enhance its meaning. Speed is an inevitable result of Othello’s heroic absolutism - “To be once in doubt / Is once to be resolved” (III.3.179-80) - and the thematic significance of such swift destruction is incalculable. His refusal to compromise, his courage, and his decisiveness are the properties that have elevated him to high rank and led him to Desdemona, but these are the same qualities that destroy him. That is the nature of tragedy, or to quote Othello, “the pity of it.”

That Iago tempts Othello to self-destruction almost entirely with words, words artfully arranged and brilliantly delivered, indicates that the villain's skills are precisely those of the playwright who created him. Lying may be regarded as a malicious form of fiction, and Iago's fictions require an acute sense of audience and mastery of histrionic and rhetorical techniques. His manipulation of Roderigo functions as a rehearsal for the more challenging assault on Othello, and he employs similar strategies in both schemes. In his endeavor to corrupt Othello's mind, Iago provokes curiosity by means of oblique statements ("I like not that," III.3.35) and provocative questions. He works his victim psychologically by flattering and then distancing him, pulling him in and pushing him away. One of his most efficient strategies is the appeal to stock characters - the cunning Venetian wife, the handsome seducer - that give Othello an intellectual purchase in the midst of chaos. Perhaps most impressively, Iago spins compelling stories teeming with vivid, salacious pictures, to which Othello's sensitive imagination responds immediately and ferociously:

IAGO
Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on?
Behold her topped?
OTHELLO Death and damnation! O!
(III.3.395-96)

As his scheme proceeds, Iago distributes his theatrical tactics in ascending order of effectiveness, and by the time he reaches "Cassio's dream" (419-26), that erotic fantasy of refracted pictures and mumbled words, he has reduced Othello's own verbal powers to exclamations and monosyllables: "O monstrous! monstrous!"; "O, blood, blood, blood!" Iago is also the master of detail, a gift revealed in his ability to create a weapon out of a preposition:

OTHELLO What? what?
IAGO
Lie -
OTHELLO With her?
IAGO With her, on her; what you will.
(IV.1.33-34)

Iago supplements his dialogue with a single prop, the handkerchief, but it too is employed in a theatrical scenario. Cassio and Bianca unwittingly perform for Othello, with Iago as director of, actor in, and, a few minutes later, reviewer of the show. Finally, Iago knows his audience: he plays unerringly upon Othello's insecurities about his status as a non-Venetian, as a black man in a white world, as inexperienced in the ways of women.

It has been observed that tragedy when speeded up turns into comedy. By allowing Othello to succumb so quickly, Shakespeare has risked inviting a comic response to this deadly action, and a number of critics have accepted that invitation, notably Shaw with his remarks about the plot as "pure farce." That Othello has so often been smirked at or that *Othello* has evoked responses proper to comedy is perhaps not surprising. In his furious progress toward self-destruction Othello sometimes resembles a conventional figure of Renaissance comedy, in which sexual jealousy was a popular topic. The butt of the jokes

was usually the insecure husband who wrongly mistrusts his wife and consumes himself with jealousy and doubt; eventually, however, some providential force dispels the confusion and happily reunites the virtuous wife and embarrassed husband. Shakespeare's fellow playwrights had created variations on this paranoid male, entertaining audiences with farcical stage business, frenzied language, and the rich theme of self-delusion, of an imagination run wild. In plays such as George Chapman's *All Fools* and John Marston's *What You Will* the foolish husband isolates himself in a realm of fantasy, dramatizing his misery in seamy images, hectoring his wife with sarcasm and rhetorical questions, often losing control of language altogether. Shakespeare himself had created such a buffoon several years earlier in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

The most colorful of these paranoid husbands appears in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), a play Shakespeare himself had acted in. We cannot know whether or not his own experience on the comic stage prompted him to explore the tragic implications of sexual suspicion. Nor can we say whether he knew such impulses personally, as a biographical reading of the sonnets would suggest. In either or both cases, Shakespeare deliberately invokes the language, the imaginative delirium, and the furious motion of the comic type in his creation of Othello. Here is Jonson's suspicious husband, a paranoid merchant whose name, Thorello, must in this context be taken as significant:

Who will not judge him worthy to be robbed,
That sets his doors wide open to a thief
And shows the felon where his treasure lies?
Again, what earthy spirit but will attempt
To taste the fruit of beauty's golden tree
When leaden sleep seals up the dragon's eye?
(*Every Man in His Humour*,
quarto text, III.1.14-21)

A Jacobean audience would have been unlikely to miss Othello's appropriation of such language: the comic husband's metaphors of robbery, his rhetorical questions, his laments at being tortured by knowledge, his obsession with images of bestiality, his increasing misogyny, his fantasies of brutal revenge. "I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips. / He that is robbed, not wanting what is stol'n, / Let him not know't, and he's not robbed at all" (III.3.341- 43): this wish for oblivion is only one of many moments when Othello's speech and thought intersect with those of his comic double. To an audience anticipating tragedy, recognition of such parallels must have been disorienting. Confronted with comic traits in a tragic environment, the spectator is tempted toward the conventional, scornful response and is baited with the false promise of resolution. But laughter is forestalled by the seriousness of the context and consciousness of the tragic mode, and providence fails to intervene. The tragic hero's descent into such unseemly behavior increases the depth and intensifies the significance of the tragic fall. In fact, the condescension Othello's behavior has evoked in critics over the centuries suggests that the playwright's audacious stroke was a success.

Shakespeare's identification of Othello with Thorello is one element in a comprehensive strategy: he has refitted the machinery of comedy to augment the tragic power of the play. (*Romeo and Juliet* is another tragedy that makes use of just such cues; similarly, the multiple versions of the Lear story, before Shakespeare took it up, end happily.) The dramatist frames the story of Othello as a comedy gone wrong, a look at what happens after the wedding banquet, Act Six of one of his romantic comedies. The first act resembles a comedy in miniature: the setting of the first two scenes, the street, is a convention not of tragedy but of Roman and Italian comedy. The action involves an elopement between a man and a young woman, a clever subordinate who serves the hero, a competitor for the hand of the bride, an irascible father seeking to undo the marriage, and a public recognition and sanction of the union. A veteran theatergoer might have noted the parallels with *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), a comedy also derived from Italian sources: the "Italian" setting, a slandered bride, a conniving, hateful officer, and an irrational, inexperienced bridegroom. Even the journey to Cyprus, a dangerous and unstable island, famous as the birthplace of Venus, inverts the Shakespearean journey to a green world that fosters revelation and emotional reordering in the romantic comedies.

These comic affinities enrich Shakespeare's tragic representation by producing an unsparing critique of comic optimism. The correspondences are not exact, of course, and most pertain to the opening movement of the tragedy, but such comic staples invite familiar reactions that the playwright then foils by driving the narrative in a contrary direction. The resemblances of setting and character matter less than the meanings to which they contribute and the responses to which an audience is prompted. *Othello* is a penetrating examination of the nature of evil, particularly its destructive capacity in the realm of love. A precondition of appreciating that portrayal is recognizing Shakespeare's challenge to the affirmations that normally attend the comic ending.

Othello was performed at court on November 2, 1604, perhaps as a new play, perhaps new only to the new king. A scholarly effort to push composition of the play as far back as 1602 has reopened the question of its date, but wherever between 1602 and 1604 we place it, we must acknowledge that the tragedy appeared at a pivotal moment in Shakespeare's creative life. The five years between 1599 and 1604 represent an unsettled period in his artistic development, a phase that sees a transition from the comedies and histories that dominated his first decade to the tragedies and romances that characterized the second. A list of titles from this period, even though their precise chronology is uncertain, indicates the vast range of tonal emphasis: *As You Like It*, *Julius Caesar*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *Measure for Measure*. Most of these plays display the characteristics of more than one dramatic mode. Structurally, *Henry V* is a comedy ending in a marriage, although the price of its "festive" conclusion is high. *Troilus* embodies a kind of formal impasse, poised between comedy and tragedy. In moving from comedy to tragedy, the playwright was testing permutations of the major dramatic modes, shading the comedies with

potentially tragic insights and drawing upon comic contrasts in telling a tragic story. Whether *Othello* was written in the middle of this phase or even last in the sequence of works, it clearly partakes of and benefits from what might be called their tonal ambiguity or formal instability. Shakespeare seems to have been exploring the interdependence of comedy and tragedy, exploiting the effects of each mode to test their antithetical conceptions of experience. Tragedy investigates and represents the nature of evil by allowing glimpses of harmony and comic solution. Thus Shakespeare's repeated reference to comic convention sharpens the definition of evil by teasing the audience with intimations of its opposite.

The evil that haunts *Othello* is especially engrossing because it is intimately related to Shakespeare's own livelihood. In telling a story of deception and revenge the playwright confronts the dangers of illusion, the malignancy of the imagination, the threat of theater itself. Imagination is the great affirmative faculty in most of his comedies, serving Petruchio and Rosalind and other well-meaning lovers and players as a creative, therapeutic, unifying force. A *Midsummer Night's Dream* is the playwright's defense of fantasy and, beyond that, his supreme apology for the stage. In the darkness of the Athenian wood, imagination is associated with dreams, vision, fantasy, fancy, fiction, and finally with love. It is a source of joy, of revelation, of access to the divine. In the last scene of *Dream*, the benighted Duke Theseus reflects condescendingly on the uses of imagination and associates it with the lunatic, the lover, and the poet. Some eight years after composing that derisive indictment, Shakespeare himself begins to take seriously the pernicious effects of the faculty that he has been accustomed to celebrate, confronting and criticizing the imaginative sources of his own art.

The turn to tragedy both results from and helps to nourish Shakespeare's growing anxiety about the fraudulence of theatricality and disgust at the ease with which the creative faculty may be abused. The mature comedies stage previews of this peril, as in *Twelfth Night*, where Malvolio confuses erotic fantasies with facts. But the tragic frame presents the consequences of the depraved or perverted imagination as fatal, not risible: in *Othello* creativity serves murder and revenge. Theseus's lunatic, lover, and poet all appear in *Othello*, albeit in fragmented and burlesqued forms. Narcissism is the only kind of love Iago displays, but he is both a poet, or maker of fictions, and a lunatic, a man whose imagination has poisoned him so that he takes pleasure in the invention and performance of malicious acts. Othello as lover is the key to the plot, of course, but he is also a spinner of tales whose own responsive imagination Iago manages to contaminate with filthy images, and by the fourth act he has descended into a kind of madness. Desdemona, too, is credited with imaginative insight. Not only does she respond empathetically to Othello's exotic tales, but she also "saw Othello's visage in his mind" (1.3.252): looking beyond the body to the heart and spirit, she loves so profoundly that she seems to legitimize Theseus's scornful remark about the lover's seeing "Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt." The principal players, in other words, all embody or are associated with some aspect of the imagination, and they either misuse or are themselves abused by the very quality that Shakespeare had spent the first

decade of his career affirming.

Othello may be read as an allegory of that career, a kind of artistic biography in which the brief symbiotic marriage of tragedy and comedy (in, say, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*) comes to an end, and tragedy smothers comedy. According to this scenario, the part of the angry father is taken by Sir Philip Sidney, who had warned, in the *Apology for Poetry*, against dramatic miscegenation, against mixing the kings of tragedy and the clowns of comedy. But Shakespeare's rejection of the mixed form involves not just decorum but a philosophical metamorphosis. Increasingly conscious of the strength and ubiquity of evil in the mortal world, the playwright begins to distrust the representational fidelity of the comic mode and, artistically speaking, allows the suspicious and darker form to murder it. The subsequent tragedies, *King Lear*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Macbeth*, are among Shakespeare's most dispiriting works, somber expositions of the duplicity of theater and the danger of illusion as manifested in feigning daughters, flattering friends, equivocal witches. Comedy has very little place in these play-worlds. The comic cues and foils that function so ironically in *Othello* are striking because, for the next few years, Shakespeare banishes them from his drama. And then, turning from tragedy to romance, he will reverse the process, employing the structures and persons of tragedy to intensify the felicity of the comic or romantic ending.

Tragedy has proven a durable and esteemed form through the centuries because it raises profound questions, elicits meanings from serious stories, explores the mysteries of experience. To see *Othello* as a tale of jealousy as Rymer and others have done is to mistake a partial manifestation of the play's subject for the subject itself. Jealousy is an emotional symptom. The real subject of *Othello* is the fragility of love, its inability to survive the corrosive conditions of a tragic world. Likewise, Iago is not ultimately responsible for the tragedy: he supplies the weapon, but Othello uses it on himself. Shakespeare represents and permits the audience to savor the potential joys of human love - physical, emotional, spiritual - and then depicts the brutal self-destruction of those possibilities. Looking hard at human experience through the dark filter of tragedy, the playwright portrays the vulnerability of mortals, even the most gifted and accomplished, to the forces of hatred and fear within themselves.

If Othello's tragedy is the paradoxical self-annihilation of his imaginative talent, a trait that ought to be beneficent and consolatory, then it is hard not to see Shakespeare the artist as exploring his own distinctive vulnerability. At the same time, however, he could not have been unaware of the ironic triumph that the play itself constitutes, an imaginative tour de force about the hazards of the imagination. Perhaps it is troubling to read *Othello* as Shakespeare's self-indictment, and yet the corollary to that reading is the recognition that his self-scrutiny produced a work of art that still disturbs, moves, and even consoles us.

Note on the Text

OTHELLO PRESENTS AN EDITOR with formidable textual problems. The play was first printed in quarto (Q) by Thomas Walkley in 1622, just a year before its appearance in the collection known today as the First Folio (F). The two texts are substantially different. F contains more than 150 lines not found in Q; Q has some 16 lines absent from F. And this is only the beginning: the two texts also exhibit more than 1,000 lexical variants. One obvious and important discrepancy is that Q omits Desdemona's "Willow Song." Another is that F omits virtually all instances of profanity and direct references to the deity, in keeping with the Parliamentary statute of 1606 forbidding blasphemy in stage plays. For example, at V.2.219, F gives Emilia the line "Oh heauen! oh heauenly Powres!" In Q she says, "O God! O heauenly God!" It appears, then, that the copy text for Q originated either before 1606 or else much later, when the decree was no longer strictly enforced. But even this is not certain.

The stumbling block in any effort to produce a modern text is that no one has been able to establish decisively the nature of the manuscripts used in the preparation of Q and F. Was Q based on an authorial manuscript? Was F? Was either printed from a theater promptbook? If so, was it F or Q? Might there have been more than one authorial manuscript, or a scribal and an authorial manuscript? Was F perhaps printed from Q, with reference to an authorial manuscript or prompt copy as a source for corrections? Many theories and diagrams and solutions have been proposed, and none has taken hold. Readers interested in pursuing the details and the implications of these problems are urged to consult Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford, 1987), E.A.J. Honigmann, *The Texts of "Othello" and Shakespearian Revision* (1996), the discussions of text in Honigmann's Arden edition (1997) and Norman Sanders's New Cambridge edition (1984), and Scott McMillin, "The *Othello* Quarto and the 'Foul-Paper' Hypothesis," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51 (2000): 67-85.

Most editors and textual scholars have agreed that F is the superior text, although Q presents many readings that seem preferable. Many previous editors, faced with the problem of two different words (F's "Judean" versus Q's "Indian" in Othello's final speech, for example) and lacking bibliographical evidence to guide them, often made their textual choice on grounds of taste. In other words, they usually chose F, the slightly longer version, as their copy text, but substituted words or phrases from Q on a case-by-case basis. The present edition uses F as the copy text and attempts to maintain a relatively strict policy on substitution or emendation. Thus, F's reading is retained if it seems at all possible - i.e., if it can be made to make sense, even if Q's alternative seems more appealing logically or artistically. The rationale for this practice is that each of the first two printings, F and Q, offers a version of the play that was satisfactory to someone - author or actor or editor or compiler - at about the time the play was written; that F, even with its weaknesses, is probably the

better of these two alternatives; and that to conflate the two texts by selecting preferable readings gives the modern reader a version unknown in the early seventeenth century. In cases where F is clearly corrupt or unintelligible, the Q reading (if available) has been accepted. The one major exception to such strict fidelity to F involves censorship: on the grounds that the oaths and references to God were removed from F in response to censorship, I have restored these words with reference to Q. In some very rare cases, when the compositors of F seem to have made an error, the Q reading has been substituted. For example, at II.1.42, F's "Arriuancie" is probably a result of eye-skip from "expectancie" in the previous line; thus, Q's "arriuance" has been adopted. Stage directions from the folio are in italics only; those supplied (from Q and from theatrical necessity) to fill out the performance are placed within brackets.

The text produced here is imperfect, but so must be any text of this play. Below are listed all cases in which this edition departs from F (except for typographical errors). The adopted reading is printed in italics, followed by its source in parentheses: Q is the First Quarto, of 1622; Q2 is the Second Quarto, of 1630; names are those of previous editors. The rejected folio reading is given in roman.

The Names of the Actors (printed at the end of the text in F)

I.1 1 *Tush* (Q) omitted **4** *'Sblood* (Q) omitted **28** *other* (Q) others **32** *God* (Q) omitted **65** *full* (Q) fall; thick-lips (Q) Thicks-lips **85** *Zounds* (Q) omitted **107** *Zounds* (Q) omitted **121** *odd-even* (Malone) odde Euen **152** *pains* (Q) apines **180** *night* (Q) might

I.2 34 *duke* (Q) Dukes **68** *darlings* (Q) Deareling **84** *Where* (Q) Whether **87** *I* (Q) omitted

I.3 59 *ALL* (Q) Sen. **106** *DUKE* (Q) omitted **130** *battles* (Q) Battle; *fortunes* (Q) fortune **141** *and* (Q) omitted; *heads* (Q) head **143** *other* (Q) others **144** *anthrophophagi* (Q) Antropophague **145** *Do grow* (Q) Grew **147** *thence* (Q) hence **155** *intently* (Q) instinctiuey **201** *Into your favor* (Q) omitted **219** *ear* (Q) eares **230** *couch* (Pope) Coach **248** *did* (Q) omitted **263-64** *heat - the young affects / In me defunct* - (Capell) heat the yong affects / In my defunct, **270** *instruments* (Q) Instrument **299** *worldly* (Q) wordly; *matters* (Q) matter **326** *beam* (Theobald) braine **377** *a snipe* (Q) Snpe **380** *H'as* (Q) She ha's

II.1 33 *prays* (Q) praye **42** *arrivance* (Q) Arriuancie **65** *ingener* (Steevens) Ingeniuer **82** *And bring all Cyprus comfort!* (Q) omitted **88** *me* (Q) omitted **93** *(Within) A sail, a sail! [A shot.] But hark. A sail!* (Collier) But hearke, a Saile. / *Within.* A Saile, a Saile. **94** *their* (Q) this **213** *hither* (Q) thither **226** *again* (Q) a game **240** *has* (Q) he's **258- 59** *mutualities* (Q) mutabilities **303** *rank* (Q) right

II.2 10 *Heaven* (Q) omitted

II.3 (New scene: Capell) **37** *unfortunate* (Q) infortunate **56** *to put* (Q) put to **60** *God* (Q) heauen **70** *God* (Q) Heauen **75** *Englishman* (Q) Englishmen **90** *Then* (Q) And; *auld* (Q) awl'd **92** *'Fore God* (Q) Why **96** *God's* (Q) heau'ns **105** *God* (Q) omitted **137** *(Within) Help! help!* (Q) omitted **138** *Zounds* (Q) omitted **146** *God's will* (Q2) Alas **150** *God's will, lieutenant, hold!* (Q) Fie, fie Lieutenant, **152**

Zounds (Q) omitted **196** *Zounds, if I* (Q) If I once **207** *leagued* (Pope) league **250** *God* (Q) Heauen **278** *God* (Q) omitted **282** *Why,* (Q) Why? **320** *here* (Q) omitted **331** *were't* (Q) were **362** *hast* (Q) hath **365** *By the mass* (Q) Introth

III.1 21 *hear, mine* heare me, mine **25** *general's wife* (Q2) Generall **29** *CASSIO Do, good my friend* (Q) omitted

III.3 52 *Yes, faith* (Q) I sooth **63** *In faith* Infaith **74** *By'r Lady* (Q) Trust me **94** *you* (Q) he **106** *By heaven* (Q) Alas **112** *In* (Q) Of **139** *But some* (Q) Wherein **147** *oft* (Q) of **162** *By heaven* (Q) omitted **175** *God* (Q) Heauen **180** *once* (Q) omitted **202** *God* (Q) Heauen **204** *keep't* (Q) kept **215** *I' faith* (Q) Trust me **217** *my* (Q) your **248** *hold* (Q) omitted **259** *qualities* (Q) Quantities **273** *of* (Q) to **278** *O, then* (Q) omitted; *mocks* (Q) mock'd **285** *Faith* (Q) Why **311** *No, faith; she* (Q) No: but she **395** *supervisor* (Q) super-vision **424** *lay* (Rowe) laid **440** *that was* (Malone) it was **455** *feels* (Q2) keeps

III.4 54 *faith* (Q) indeed **75** *I' faith* (Q) Indeed **77** *God* (Q) Heauen **81** *Heaven* (Q) omitted **96** *I' faith* (Q) Insooth **97** *Zounds* (Q) Away **170** *I' faith* (Q) Indeed **181** *absence now* (Capell) Absence: now **186** *by my faith* (Q) in good troth

IV.1 32 *Faith* (Q) Why **36** *Zounds* (Q) omitted **52** *No, forbear* (Q) omitted **77** *unsuiting* (Q) resulting **101** *conster* (Q) conserue **103** *now* (Q) omitted **107** *power* (Q) dowre **110** *a* (Q) omitted **111** *i' faith* (Q) indeed **123** *Faith* (Q) Why **130** *beckons* (Q) becomes **160** *Faith* (Q) omitted **162** *Faith* (Q) Yes **212** *God* (Q) omitted **232** *By my troth* (Q) Trust me **242** *an* (Q) omitted

IV.2 30 *Nay* (Q) May **33** *But not the words* (Q) omitted **81** *Impudent strumpet!* (Q) omitted **141** *heaven* (Q) heauens **155** *them in* (Q2) them: or **167** *And he does chide with you* (Q) omitted **175** *daff'st* (Collier) dafts **182** *Faith* (Q) omitted

IV.3 22 *faith* (Q) Father **23** *thee* (Q) omitted **39** *sighing* (Q2) singing **74** *'Ud's pity* (Q) why **103** *God* (Q) Heauen

V.1 1 *bulk* (Q) Barke **35** *Forth* (Q) For **91** *O heaven* (Q) Yes, 'tis **105** *out* (Q) omitted

V.2 35 *so* (Q) omitted **57** *Then Lord* (Q) O Heauen **84** *DESDEMONA O Lord, Lord, Lord!* (Q) omitted **118** *O Lord* (Q) Alas **128** *heard* (Q) heare **219** *O God! O heavenly God!* (Q) Oh Heauen! oh heauenly Powres! **220** *Zounds* (Q) Come **241** *here* (Q) omitted **292** *damnèd* (Q) cursed

THE NAMES OF THE ACTORS⁵

OTHELLO, *the Moor [leader of the Venetian armed forces]*

BRABANTIO, *father to Desdemona*

CASSIO, *an honorable lieutenant*

IAGO, *a villain*

RODERIGO, *a gulled gentleman*

DUKE OF VENICE

SENATORS

MONTANO, *Governor of Cyprus*

GENTLEMEN OF CYPRUS

LODOVICO *and* GRATIANO, *two noble Venetians*

SAILORS

CLOWN

DESDEMONA, *wife to Othello*

EMILIA, *wife to Iago*

BIANCA, *a courtesan*

[MESSENGER, HERALD, OFFICERS, VENETIAN GENTLEMEN, MUSICIANS,
ATTENDANTS]

[SCENE: *Venice and Cyprus*]

The Tragedy of Othello the Moor of Venice



I.1 Enter Roderigo and Iago.

RODERIGO

Tush, never tell me! I take it much unkindly
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.

IAGO

'Sblood, but you'll not hear me!
If ever I did dream of such a matter,
Abhor me.

RODERIGO

Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate.

IAGO

Despise me if I do not. Three great ones of the city,
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,
Off-capped to him; and, by the faith of man,
I know my price; I am worth no worse a place.
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,
Evades them, with a bombast circumstance
Horribly stuffed with epithets of war,
Nonsuits my mediators; for, "Certes," says he,

I.1 A street in Venice 4 'Sblood (an oath; originally "by God's [i.e., Christ's] blood") 8 great ones influential men 13 bombast circumstance pompous evasion, roundabout excuses (bombast is cotton stuffing; see *stuffed*, l. 14) 15 Nonsuits denies

"I have already chose my officer."
And what was he?
Forsooth, a great arithmetician,
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine

(A fellow almost damned in a fair wife)
That never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster, unless the bookish theoric,
Wherein the tonguèd consuls can propose
As masterly as he. Mere prattle without practice
Is all his soldiership. But he, sir, had th' election;
And I (of whom his eyes had seen the proof
At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds
Christened and heathen) must be beleed and calmed
By debtor and creditor. This countercaster,
He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,
And I - God bless the mark! - his Moorship's ancient.

RODERIGO

By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman.

IAGO

Why, there's no remedy; 'tis the curse of service.
Preferment goes by letter and affection,
And not by old gradation, where each second
Stood heir to th' first. Now, sir, be judge yourself,
Whether I in any just term am affined
To love the Moor.

18 *arithmetician* theorist, bean counter **20** *almost . . . wife* (a mystifying reference, perhaps a result of error in textual transmission; although Cassio is unmarried, the line links him with women early in the play) **22** *division of a battle* arrangement of troops **23** *unless . . . theoric* except hypothetically **24** *tonguèd consuls* i.e., those who advise but don't actually fight **29** *beleed and calmed* i.e., left behind; a nautical metaphor for frustration ("belee" = "to place under the lee, or unfavorably to the wind") **30** *debtor and creditor* bookkeeper; *countercaster* accountant **32** *God . . . mark* (an exclamation of impatience); *ancient* ensign, standard-bearer (an officer inferior to lieutenant) **35-36** *Preferment . . . gradation* i.e., promotion now depends on favoritism or whom you know, not on the old system of rising through the ranks **38** *affined* bound

RODERIGO I would not follow him then.

IAGO

O, sir, content you;
I follow him to serve my turn upon him.
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly followed. You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashiered.
Whip me such honest knaves! Others there are
Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
Do well thrive by them, and when they have lined their

coats,
Do themselves homage. These fellows have some soul,
And such a one do I profess myself. For, sir,
It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago.
In following him, I follow but myself.
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end,
For when my outward action doth demonstrate
The native act and figure of my heart
In complement extern, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at. I am not what I am.

44 knee-crooking i.e., constantly bowing 45 doting . . . bondage i.e., loving the role of the fawning servant 47 provender provisions, especially dry food for animals; cashiered dismissed 48 Whip me . . . knaves (a common early modern construction, the ethical dative, meaning "As for me, I say whip such men") 49 trimmed dressed up; visages masks, appearances 50 yet still 53 Do . . . homage honor themselves by looking out for themselves 59 peculiar end private purpose 60-62 my outward . . . complement extern i.e., when my behavior corresponds to my real feelings 64 daws jackdaws (proverbially foolish birds)

RODERIGO

What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe
If he can carry't thus!

IAGO Call up her father,
Rouse him. Make after him, poison his delight,
Proclaim him in the streets. Incense her kinsmen,
And though he in a fertile climate dwell,
Plague him with flies. Though that his joy be joy,
Yet throw such chances of vexation on't
As it may lose some color.

RODERIGO

Here is her father's house. I'll call aloud.

IAGO

Do, with like timorous accent and dire yell
As when, by night and negligence, the fire
Is spied in populous cities.

RODERIGO

What, ho, Brabantio! Signor Brabantio, ho!

IAGO

Awake! What, ho, Brabantio! Thieves! thieves!
Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!
Thieves! thieves!
[Enter Brabantio] above.

BRABANTIO

What is the reason of this terrible summons?
What is the matter there?

RODERIGO

Signor, is all your family within?

IAGO

Are your doors locked?

BRABANTIO Why, wherefore ask you this?

65 *the thick-lips* (a racist slur on Othello's African heritage); *owe* own **66** *carry't thus* bring it off (i.e., succeed) **71** *chances of vexation* possibilities for misery and embarrassment **72** *lose some color* i.e., his joy will fade **74** *timorous* frightening

IAGO

Zounds, sir, you're robbed! For shame, put on your gown!

Your heart is burst; you have lost half your soul.

Even now, now, very now, an old black ram

Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise!

Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,

Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.

Arise, I say!

BRABANTIO What, have you lost your wits?

RODERIGO

Most reverend signor, do you know my voice?

BRABANTIO

Not I. What are you?

RODERIGO

My name is Roderigo.

BRABANTIO The worser welcome!

I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors.

In honest plainness thou hast heard me say

My daughter is not for thee. And now, in madness,

Being full of supper and distemp'ring draughts,

Upon malicious knavery dost thou come

To start my quiet.

RODERIGO

Sir, sir, sir -

BRABANTIO But thou must needs be sure

My spirits and my place have in their power

To make this bitter to thee.

RODERIGO Patience, good sir.

BRABANTIO

What tell'st thou me of robbing? This is Venice;

85 *Zounds* (an oath; originally "by God's [i.e., Christ's] wounds") **87** *very now* at this very moment **88** *tupping* copulating with (used specifically of rams) **89** *snorting* snoring **98** *distemp'ring draughts* intoxicating drinks **100** *start my quiet* disturb my peace **102** *spirits* emotions (i.e., anger)

My house is not a grange.

RODERIGO Most grave Brabantio,
In simple and pure soul I come to you.

IAGO Zounds, sir, you are one of those that will not serve God if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service, and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins, and jennets for Germans.

BRABANTIO
What profane wretch art thou?

IAGO I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are making the beast with two backs.

BRABANTIO
Thou art a villain.

IAGO You are - a senator.

BRABANTIO
This thou shalt answer. I know thee, Roderigo.

RODERIGO
Sir, I will answer anything. But I beseech you,
If't be your pleasure and most wise consent,
As partly I find it is, that your fair daughter,
At this odd-even and dull watch o' th' night,
Transported, with no worse nor better guard
But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,
To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor -
If this be known to you, and your allowance,
We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs.
But if you know not this, my manners tell me,
We have your wrong rebuke. Do not believe

105 *grange* farmhouse 110 *covered* . . . *horse* (another figure for bestial copulation; Barbary was the home of Berbers, or Moors) 111 *nephews* (kinsmen generally; here grandsons) 111-12 *coursers* for *cousins* racehorses for relatives 112 *jennets* for *germans* small Spanish horses for near kinsmen 115 *beast with two backs* (a visual symbol of sexual intercourse) 121 *odd-even and dull watch* i.e., in-between and sleepy hour, perhaps midnight (between evening and morning) 125 *allowance* approval

That, from the sense of all civility,
I thus would play and trifle with your reverence.
Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,
I say again, hath made a gross revolt,
Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger
Of here and everywhere. Straight satisfy yourself.
If she be in her chamber, or your house,
Let loose on me the justice of the state

For thus deluding you.

BRABANTIO Strike on the tinder, ho!
Give me a taper! Call up all my people!
This accident is not unlike my dream.
Belief of it oppresses me already.
Light, I say! light! *Exit [above].*

IAGO Farewell, for I must leave you.
It seems not meet, nor wholesome to my place,
To be producted - as, if I stay, I shall -
Against the Moor. For I do know the state,
However this may gall him with some check,
Cannot with safety cast him; for he's embarked
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,
Which even now stands in act, that for their souls
Another of his fathom they have none
To lead their business; in which regard,
Though I do hate him as I do hell pains,
Yet, for necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign. That you shall surely find
him,
Lead to the Sagittary the raised search;

129 from the sense of against 134 extravagant and wheeling i.e., far from home and rootless, roving 135 Straight straightaway, immediately 138 tinder tinderbox (for a light) 140 accident occurrence 144 producted produced (i.e., called as a witness) 146 check reprimand 147 cast dismiss 149 stands in act is imminent; for their souls i.e., to save their souls 150 fathom deep capacity (i.e., talent) 156 the Sagittary (an inn)

And there will I be with him. So farewell. *Exit.*
Enter Brabantio [below, in his nightgown], with
Servants and Torches.

BRABANTIO
It is too true an evil. Gone she is,
And what's to come of my despised time
Is nought but bitterness. Now, Roderigo,
Where didst thou see her? - O unhappy girl! -
With the Moor, say'st thou? - Who would be a father?-
How didst thou know 'twas she? - O, she deceives me
Past thought! - What said she to you? - Get more tapers!
Raise all my kindred! - Are they married, think you?

RODERIGO
Truly I think they are.

BRABANTIO
O heaven! How got she out? O treason of the blood!
Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds
By what you see them act. Is there not charms
By which the property of youth and maidhood

May be abused? Have you not read, Roderigo,
Of some such thing?

RODERIGO Yes, sir, I have indeed.

BRABANTIO

Call up my brother. - O, would you had had her! -
Some one way, some another. - Do you know
Where we may apprehend her and the Moor?

RODERIGO

I think I can discover him, if you please
To get good guard and go along with me.

BRABANTIO

Pray you lead on. At every house I'll call;
I may command at most. - Get weapons, ho!

157 s.d. *nightgown* dressing gown; *Torches* torchbearers 159 *despisèd* time unfortunate life 170 *property*
natural behavior

And raise some special officers of night. -
On, good Roderigo; I will deserve your pains. *Exeunt.*



1.2 Enter Othello, Iago, Attendants, with Torches.

IAGO

Though in the trade of war I have slain men,
Yet do I hold it very stuff o' th' conscience
To do no contrived murder. I lack iniquity
Sometime to do me service. Nine or ten times
I had thought t' have yerked him here under the ribs.

OTHELLO

'Tis better as it is.

IAGO Nay, but he prated,
And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
Against your honor
That with the little godliness I have
I did full hard forbear him. But I pray you, sir,
Are you fast married? Be assured of this,
That the magnifico is much beloved,
And hath in his effect a voice potential
As double as the duke's. He will divorce you,
Or put upon you what restraint or grievance
The law, with all his might to enforce it on,

Will give him cable.

OTHELLO Let him do his spite.

My services which I have done the signory

180 *special . . . night* (a famous Venetian nocturnal patrol) 181 *deserve repay*

1.2 The street in front of the Sagittary 2 *very stuff* the essence 5 *yerked* struck or (as with a horse) kicked *under the ribs* 6 *prated* babbled 10 *did full hard forbear* i.e., barely tolerated 11 *fast* securely 12 *magnifico* aristocrat (i.e., Brabantio) 13-14 *a voice . . . duke's* i.e., an influence twice as great as the duke's 17 *give him cable* i.e., allow him freedom 18 *signory* Venetian political establishment

Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know -
Which, when I know that boasting is an honor,
I shall promulgate - I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reached. For know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhousèd free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the sea's worth. But look, what lights come yond?
Enter Cassio [and Officers] with Torches.

IAGO

Those are the raisèd father and his friends.
You were best go in.

OTHELLO Not I; I must be found.
My parts, my title, and my perfect soul
Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?

IAGO

By Janus, I think no.

OTHELLO

The servants of the duke? And my lieutenant?
The goodness of the night upon you, friends!
What is the news?

CASSIO The duke does greet you, general,
And he requires your haste-posthaste appearance
Even on the instant.

OTHELLO What is the matter, think you?

CASSIO

Something from Cyprus, as I may divine.

19 *yet to know* still not generally known 21 *promulgate* broadcast, make known 22 *siege* seat (i.e., rank or status); *demerits* merits, deserts (obsolete form) 23-24 *May speak . . . have reached* i.e., can without boasting claim worldly success equal to that of Desdemona's family (*this that I have reached*) 26-27 *my unhousèd . . . and confine* i.e., trade the outdoors for domesticity, my independence for limits 29 *raisèd* roused, alarmed 31 *parts* abilities; *perfect soul* clear conscience 32 *manifest me* i.e., make my case 33 *Janus* the two-faced Roman god 39 *as I may divine* i.e., I suppose

It is a business of some heat. The galleys
Have sent a dozen sequent messengers
This very night at one another's heels,
And many of the consuls, raised and met,
Are at the duke's already. You have been hotly called for;
When being not at your lodging to be found,
The Senate hath sent about three several quests
To search you out.

OTHELLO 'Tis well I am found by you.
I will but spend a word here in the house,
And go with you. *[Exit.]*

CASSIO Ancient, what makes he here?

IAGO
Faith, he tonight hath boarded a land carrack.
If it prove lawful prize, he's made forever.

CASSIO
I do not understand.

IAGO He's married.

CASSIO To who?
[Enter Othello.]

IAGO
Marry, to - Come, captain, will you go?

OTHELLO Have with you.

CASSIO
Here comes another troop to seek for you.
Enter Brabantio, Roderigo, with Officers and Torches.

IAGO
It is Brabantio. General, be advised.
He comes to bad intent.

OTHELLO Holla! stand there!

RODERIGO
Signor, it is the Moor.

BRABANTIO Down with him, thief!
[They draw on both sides.]

40 *heat* intensity or urgency **41** *sequent* consecutive **46** *sent about* sent out; *several*
separate **50** *Faith* by my faith, in faith (a mild oath); *carrack* treasure ship **53** *Marry* (a
mild form of the oath "By the Virgin Mary")

IAGO
You, Roderigo! Come, sir, I am for you.

OTHELLO

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.
Good signor, you shall more command with years
Than with your weapons.

BRABANTIO

O thou foul thief, where hast thou stowed my daughter?
Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her!
For I'll refer me to all things of sense,
If she in chains of magic were not bound,
Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,
So opposite to marriage that she shunned
The wealthy curlèd darlings of our nation,
Would ever have, t' incur a general mock,
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as thou - to fear, not to delight.
Judge me the world if 'tis not gross in sense
That thou hast practiced on her with foul charms,
Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals
That weakens motion. I'll have't disputed on;
'Tis probable, and palpable to thinking.
I therefore apprehend and do attach thee
For an abuser of the world, a practicer
Of arts inhibited and out of warrant.
Lay hold upon him. If he do resist,
Subdue him at his peril.

OTHELLO Hold your hands,
Both you of my inclining and the rest.
Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it
Without a prompter. Where will you that I go

58 am for you challenge you 59 Keep up i.e., sheathe, put away 69 a general mock universal laughter 72 gross in sense obvious 75 motion perception; disputed on brought to law 77 attach arrest

To answer this your charge?

BRABANTIO To prison, till fit time
Of law and course of direct session
Call thee to answer.

OTHELLO What if I do obey?
How may the duke be therewith satisfied,
Whose messengers are here about my side
Upon some present business of the state
To bring me to him?

OFFICER 'Tis true, most worthy signor.
The duke's in council, and your noble self
I am sure is sent for.

BRABANTIO How? The duke in council?
In this time of the night? Bring him away.
Mine's not an idle cause. The duke himself,
Or any of my brothers of the state,
Cannot but feel this wrong as 'twere their own;
For if such actions may have passage free,
Bondslaves and pagans shall our statesmen be. *Exeunt.*



1.3 Enter Duke, Senators, and Officers [with lights].

DUKE
There's no composition in this news
That gives them credit.

FIRST SENATOR Indeed they are disproportioned. My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.

DUKE
And mine a hundred forty.

SECOND SENATOR And mine two hundred.
But though they jump not on a just account -

86 direct session regular trial 95 idle inconsequential 1.3 The Venetian Senate Chamber 1 composition
consistency; news newly received information 5 jump agree; just account precise estimate

As in these cases where the aim reports
'Tis oft with difference - yet do they all confirm
A Turkish fleet, and bearing up to Cyprus.

DUKE
Nay, it is possible enough to judgment.
I do not so secure me in the error
But the main article I do approve
In fearful sense.

SAILOR *Within* What, ho! what, ho! what, ho! *Enter Sailor.*

OFFICER
A messenger from the galleys.

DUKE Now, what's the business?

SAILOR
The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes.
So was I bid report here to the state
By Signor Angelo.

DUKE

How say you by this change?

FIRST SENATOR This cannot be
By no assay of reason. 'Tis a pageant
To keep us in false gaze. When we consider
Th' importancy of Cyprus to the Turk,
And let ourselves again but understand
That, as it more concerns the Turk than Rhodes,
So may he with more facile question bear it,
For that it stands not in such warlike brace,
But altogether lacks th' abilities
That Rhodes is dressed in - if we make thought of this,
We must not think the Turk is so unskillful
To leave that latest which concerns him first,

6 aim guess 10-12 I do not . . . sense the discrepancies of the reports aren't enough to cancel the frightening substance (main article) of them 14 preparation forces, assembled fleet 18 assay test, effort; pageant sideshow 19 in false gaze looking the wrong way 23 with . . . it capture it more easily 24 brace state of defense 28 latest last

Neglecting an attempt of ease and gain
To wake and wage a danger profitless.

DUKE

Nay, in all confidence, he's not for Rhodes.

OFFICER

Here is more news.

Enter a Messenger.

MESSENGER

The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,
Steering with due course toward the isle of Rhodes,
Have there injointed them with an after fleet.

FIRST SENATOR

Ay, so I thought. How many, as you guess?

MESSENGER

Of thirty sail; and now they do restem
Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance
Their purposes toward Cyprus. Signor Montano,
Your trusty and most valiant servitor,
With his free duty recommends you thus
And prays you to believe him.

DUKE

'Tis certain then for Cyprus.
Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town?

FIRST SENATOR

He's now in Florence.

DUKE

Write from us to him post-posthaste. Dispatch!

FIRST SENATOR

Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

Enter Brabantio, Othello, Cassio, Iago, Roderigo, and Officers.

30 wake and wage rouse and risk 33 Ottomites Turkish fleet (Turks and Ottomites seem to have been identified in the Elizabethan mind); *reverend and gracious* (honorific term of address to the assembly) 34 due direct 35 *injointed* combined (themselves); *after fleet* a subordinate or secondary navy 37 *restem* steer again 38 *with frank appearance* openly, without deceit 41 *free duty* unlimited loyalty; *recommends* informs

DUKE

Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you

Against the general enemy Ottoman.

[To Brabantio]

I did not see you. Welcome, gentle signor.

We lacked your counsel and your help tonight.

BRABANTIO

So did I yours. Good your grace, pardon me.

Neither my place, nor aught I heard of business,

Hath raised me from my bed; nor doth the general care

Take hold on me; for my particular grief

Is of so floodgate and o'erbearing nature

That it engulfs and swallows other sorrows,

And it is still itself.

DUKE Why, what's the matter?

BRABANTIO

My daughter! O, my daughter!

ALL Dead?

BRABANTIO Ay, to me.

She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted

By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;

For nature so prepost'rously to err,

Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,

Sans witchcraft could not.

DUKE

Whoe'er he be that in this foul proceeding

Hath thus beguiled your daughter of herself,

And you of her, the bloody book of law

You shall yourself read in the bitter letter

After your own sense; yea, though our proper son

Stood in your action.

48 *straight* straightaway, immediately 53 *place* position (as senator) 56 *of so floodgate* so torrential 57 *engulfs* gulps down 60 *abused* deceived 61 *mountebanks* quacks or scam artists (for which Venice was notorious) 63 *deficient* feeble-minded 67-69 *bloody* . . . *sense* i.e., you may interpret the law in the strictest sense that suits you 69 *our proper* my own 70 *Stood in your action* were the object of your charges

BRABANTIO Humbly I thank your grace. Here is the man - this Moor, whom now, it seems, Your special mandate for the state affairs Hath hither brought.

ALL We are very sorry for't.

DUKE *[To Othello]*

What, in your own part, can you say to this?

BRABANTIO

Nothing, but this is so.

OTHELLO

Most potent, grave, and reverend signors,
My very noble and approved good masters,
That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter,
It is most true; true I have married her.
The very head and front of my offending
Hath this extent, no more. Rude am I in my speech,
And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace;
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
Their dearest action in the tented field;
And little of this great world can I speak
More than pertains to feats of broils and battle;
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,
I will a round unvarnished tale deliver
Of my whole course of love - what drugs, what
charms,
What conjuration, and what mighty magic
(For such proceeding I am charged withal)
I won his daughter.

BRABANTIO A maiden never bold;
Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion

77 *approved* tested by experience 81 *Rude* unskilled, unpolished 83 *pith* strength 84 *wasted* gone by 85 *dearest* most valuable 87 *broils* strife, hurly-burly 90 *round* plain 95-96 *her motion* / *Blushed* her own feelings caused her to blush

Blushed at herself; and she - in spite of nature,
Of years, of country, credit, everything -
To fall in love with what she feared to look on!
It is a judgment maimed and most imperfect
That will confess perfection so could err
Against all rules of nature, and must be driven
To find out practices of cunning hell
Why this should be. I therefore vouch again
That with some mixtures pow'rful o'er the blood,
Or with some dram, conjured to this effect,
He wrought upon her.

DUKE To vouch this is no proof,
Without more wider and more overt test
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods
Of modern seeming do prefer against him.

SENATOR

But, Othello, speak.
Did you by indirect and forcèd courses
Subdue and poison this young maid's affections?
Or came it by request, and such fair question
As soul to soul affordeth?

OTHELLO I do beseech you,
Send for the lady to the Sagittary
And let her speak of me before her father.
If you do find me foul in her report,
The trust, the office, I do hold of you
Not only take away, but let your sentence
Even fall upon my life.

DUKE Fetch Desdemona hither.

97 credit reputation 101-2 must be driven . . . hell i.e., the reasonable mind must seek diabolical plots 103 vouch claim 104 blood passions, sexual appetite 105 dram small portion; conjured bewitched, magically produced (accent on second syllable) 107 more wider . . . overt more thorough and manifest (i.e., convincing) 108-9 these thin . . . seeming i.e., these flimsy signs and conclusions drawn from ordinary appearances 111 forcèd (1) unnatural, (2) coercive 113 question talk, conversation 117 foul ugly (also "dark," perhaps Othello's ironic reference to his own color)

OTHELLO

Ancient, conduct them; you best know the place.
[Exit two or three Officers with Iago.]
And till she come, as truly as to heaven
I do confess the vices of my blood,
So justly to your grave ears I'll present
How I did thrive in this fair lady's love,
And she in mine.

DUKE

Say it, Othello.

OTHELLO

Her father loved me, oft invited me,
Still questioned me the story of my life
From year to year - the battles, sieges, fortunes
That I have passed.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days
To th' very moment that he bade me tell it.
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field;
Of hairbreadth scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach;
Of being taken by the insolent foe

And sold to slavery. Of my redemption thence
 And portance in my traveler's history,
 Wherein of anters vast and deserts idle,
 Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch
 heaven,
 It was my hint to speak - such was my process;
 And of the cannibals that each other eat,
 The anthropophagi, and men whose heads
 Do grow beneath their shoulders. These things to hear
 Would Desdemona seriously incline;

129 *Still* constantly 134 *disastrous* unlucky (Latin "ill-starred") 135 *accidents by flood and field* occurrences on sea and land 136 *in . . . deadly breach* gap in a defense inviting immediate disaster 137 *insolent* (1) arrogant, (2) insulting 139 *portance* behavior, bearing; *traveler's history* (a minor sub-genre of writing c. 1600, often containing tall tales) 140 *anters* caves 142 *hint* occasion, opportunity; *process* drift 144 *anthropophagi* man-eaters

But still the house affairs would draw her thence,
 Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
 She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
 Devour up my discourse. Which I observing,
 Took once a pliant hour, and found good means
 To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart
 That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
 Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
 But not intently. I did consent,
 And often did beguile her of her tears
 When I did speak of some distressful stroke
 That my youth suffered. My story being done,
 She gave me for my pains a world of kisses.
 She swore in faith 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange;
 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful.
 She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished
 That heaven had made her such a man. She thanked
 me,
 And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
 I should but teach him how to tell my story,
 And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake.
 She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
 And I loved her that she did pity them.
 This only is the witchcraft I have used.
 Here comes the lady. Let her witness it.
Enter Desdemona, Iago, Attendants.

DUKE

I think this tale would win my daughter too.
 Good Brabantio,
 Take up this mangled matter at the best.
 Men do their broken weapons rather use
 Than their bare hands.

151 *pliant* convenient 153 *dilate* expand upon 154 *by parcels* in bits and pieces 155 *intently* i.e., with her full attention 166 *hint* opportunity (as at l. 142)

BRABANTIO I pray you hear her speak.
If she confess that she was half the wooer,
Destruction on my head if my bad blame
Light on the man! Come hither, gentle mistress.
Do you perceive in all this noble company
Where most you owe obedience?

DESDEMONA My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty.
To you I am bound for life and education.
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you: you are the lord of duty;
I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband;
And so much duty as my mother showed
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor my lord.

BRABANTIO God be with you! I have done.
Please it your grace, on to the state affairs.
I had rather to adopt a child than get it.
Come hither, Moor.
I here do give thee that with all my heart
Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart
I would keep from thee. For your sake, jewel,
I am glad at soul I have no other child,
For thy escape would teach me tyranny,
To hang clogs on them. I have done, my lord.

DUKE
Let me speak like yourself and lay a sentence
Which, as a grece or step, may help these lovers

182 *education* rearing 188 *challenge* assert the right 191 *get* beget 194 *but thou hast already* if you didn't have it already 195 *For your sake* thanks to you 197 *escape* transgression, escapade 198 *clogs* weights (of the kind attached to prisoners; in the seventeenth century they were made of blocks of wood) 199 *like yourself* as you should; *sentence* brief sermon or maxim (i.e., the following rhymed couplets of advice) 200 *grece* staircase

Into your favor.
When remedies are past, the griefs are ended
By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.
To mourn a mischief that is past and gone
Is the next way to draw new mischief on.
What cannot be preserved when fortune takes,
Patience her injury a mock'ry makes.
The robbed that smiles steals something from the thief;
He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.

BRABANTIO

So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile:
We lose it not so long as we can smile.
He bears the sentence well that nothing bears
But the free comfort which from thence he hears;
But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow
That to pay grief must of poor patience borrow.
These sentences, to sugar, or to gall,
Being strong on both sides, are equivocal.
But words are words. I never yet did hear
That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear.
I humbly beseech you proceed to th' affairs of state.

DUKE The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus. Othello, the fortitude of the place is best known to you; and though we have there a substitute of most allowed sufficiency, yet opinion, a more sovereign

202-3 When remedies . . . depended i.e., disappointment is best mended by facing the unhappy outcome that you feared 206-7 What cannot . . . mock'ry makes to show patience when one is unfortunate is to ridicule and thus show superiority to fortune 209 spends a bootless grief indulges in worthless lamentation 210 So in that case; of Cyprus us beguile cheat us out of possession of Cyprus 212-15 He bears . . . borrow i.e., he who can simply take the advice and forget the injury is lucky, but he who is still sorrowful (who has to borrow from patience to pay a debt to grief) has to put up with the lecture and the misery 219 pierced (some editors emend to "pieced" - i.e., "mended") 222 fortitude defensive strength, fortification 223 substitute governor or deputy (another instance of replacement in the play) 224 allowed acknowledged; opinion reputation 224-25 more sovereign mistress of effects better predictor of outcomes

mistress of effects, throws a more safer voice on you. You must therefore be content to slubber the gloss of your new fortunes with this more stubborn and boist'rous expedition.

OTHELLO

The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
My thrice-driven bed of down. I do agnize
A natural and prompt alacrity
I find in hardness; and do undertake
This present wars against the Ottomites.
Most humbly, therefore, bending to your state,
I crave fit disposition for my wife,
Due reference of place, and exhibition,
With such accommodation and besort
As levels with her breeding.

DUKE

Why, at her father's.

BRABANTIO I will not have it so.

OTHELLO

Nor I.

DESDEMONA Nor would I there reside,
To put my father in impatient thoughts
By being in his eye. Most gracious duke,
To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear,

And let me find a charter in your voice,
T' assist my simpleness.

DUKE

What would you, Desdemona?

226 *slubber* stain or darken 227 *stubborn* untamable 231 *thrice-driven bed of down* feather bed winnowed three times to make it supersoft 231-33 *agnize* . . . *hardness* i.e., recognize in myself a taste (*alacrity*) for hardship or challenge 235 *bending to your state* i.e., bowing to your position 236 *fit disposition* appropriate arrangements 237 *reference of place* assignment of residence; *exhibition* allowance 238 *besort* companions 239 *levels with* matches 244 *prosperous* favorable 245 *a charter* license, authority 246 *simpleness* inexperience

DESDEMONA

That I did love the Moor to live with him,
My downright violence, and storm of fortunes,
May trumpet to the world. My heart's subdued
Even to the very quality of my lord.

I saw Othello's visage in his mind,
And to his honors and his valiant parts
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.
So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
The rites for why I love him are bereft me,
And I a heavy interim shall support
By his dear absence. Let me go with him.

OTHELLO

Let her have your voice.
Vouch with me, heaven, I therefore beg it not
To please the palate of my appetite,
Nor to comply with heat - the young affects
In me defunct - and proper satisfaction;
But to be free and bounteous to her mind.
And heaven defend your good souls that you think
I will your serious and great business scant
When she is with me. No, when light-winged toys
Of feathered Cupid seel with wanton dullness
My speculative and officed instruments,
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,
And all indign and base adversities

249 *downright violence* obvious unconventionality (*violence* against propriety); *storm of fortunes* i.e., the tempestuous results of that unconventionality 251 *quality* essential nature 252 *I saw* . . . *his mind* i.e., I looked within Othello, replacing his dark face (*visage*) with his *mind* 253 *parts* talents, gifts 257 *rites* ceremonies or perhaps also "rights," privileges of marriage 259 *dear* costly, grievous 263 *comply with heat* follow the dictates of passion; *young affects* youthful desires 268-69 *light-winged toys* . . . *Cupid* trivial sports of love 269-70 *seel* . . . *instruments* i.e., blind my vision (*speculative and officed instruments*) with the low desires of the body 271 *That* such that; *disports* i.e., sexual pleasures 273 *indign* shameful

Make head against my estimation!

DUKE

Be it as you shall privately determine,
Either for her stay or going. Th' affair cries haste,
And speed must answer it.

SENATOR

You must away tonight.

OTHELLO With all my heart.

DUKE

At nine i' th' morning here we'll meet again.
Othello, leave some officer behind,
And he shall our commission bring to you,
And such things else of quality and respect
As doth import you.

OTHELLO So please your grace, my ancient;
A man he is of honesty and trust.
To his conveyance I assign my wife,
With what else needful your good grace shall think
To be sent after me.

DUKE Let it be so.

Good night to every one.

[To Brabantio] And, noble signor,
If virtue no delighted beauty lack,
Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

SENATOR

Adieu, brave Moor. Use Desdemona well.

BRABANTIO

Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:
She has deceived her father, and may thee.
Exit [Duke, with Senators, Officers, etc.].

OTHELLO

My life upon her faith! - Honest Iago,
My Desdemona must I leave to thee.

274 *Make head* mount an attack; *estimation* reputation 283 *import* concern 285 *conveyance* escorting 289 *If virtue . . . lack* if worthiness (*virtue*) has the power to be delightful (*delighted*) 294 *faith* fidelity, faithfulness

I prithee let thy wife attend on her,
And bring them after in the best advantage.
Come, Desdemona. I have but an hour
Of love, of worldly matters and direction,
To spend with thee. We must obey the time.
Exit [Othello with Desdemona].

RODERIGO Iago -

IAGO What say'st thou, noble heart?

RODERIGO What will I do, think'st thou?

IAGO Why, go to bed and sleep.

RODERIGO I will incontinently drown myself.

IAGO If thou dost, I shall never love thee after. Why, thou silly gentleman?

RODERIGO It is silliness to live when to live is torment, and then have we a prescription to die when death is our physician.

IAGO O villainous! I have looked upon the world for four times seven years, and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found man that knew how to love himself. Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon.

RODERIGO What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond, but it is not in my virtue to amend it.

IAGO Virtue? a fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many -

297 in the best advantage at the most opportune time 299 direction overseeing business 305 incontinently immediately 309-10 have . . . physician ancient custom (prescription) leads us to kill ourselves if doing so will cure our ills 315 guinea hen bird (figuratively, slang term for a woman; cf. "chick") 318 virtue power, ability 321 wills desires (but the term is sexually loaded: in the period its specific sense of "erotic desire" was supplemented with numerous connotations, from "penis" to "vagina") 323 gender kind (cf. "genre"); distract divide

either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry - why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the beam of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most prepost'rous conclusions. But we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings or unbitted lusts; whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion.

RODERIGO It cannot be.

IAGO It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will. Come, be a man! Drown thyself? Drown cats and blind puppies! I have professed me thy friend, and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness. I could never better stead thee than now. Put money in thy purse. Follow thou the wars; defeat thy favor with an usurped beard. I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be long that Desdemona should continue her love to the Moor - put money in thy purse - nor he his to her. It was a violent commencement in her, and thou shalt see an answerable sequestration - put but money in thy purse. These Moors are changeable in their wills - fill thy purse with money. The food that to him now is as luscious as locusts shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth: when she is sated with his body, she will find the errors of her choice. Therefore put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a

324-25 sterile . . . industry either unproductive or richly cultivated 325 corrigible authority power to correct 327 poise counterbalance 328 blood and baseness bestial instincts 330 motions impulses; unbitted

uncontrolled, unbridled 331-32 *a sect or scion* an offshoot or a cutting 334 *merely* completely (i.e., nothing more than) 337-38 *perdurable* unbreakable 338 *stead* help 339-40 *defeat thy favor* undo your facial appearance (i.e., disguise yourself by putting on an *usurped* [counterfeit] beard) 344-45 *answerable sequestration* equivalent separation 347 *locusts* carobs, known for their sweet juice 348 *coloquintida* medicine made from the colocynth, a bitter apple

more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money thou canst. If sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and supersubtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her. Therefore make money. A pox of drowning thyself! - it is clean out of the way. Seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her.

RODERIGO Wilt thou be fast to my hopes, if I depend on the issue?

IAGO Thou art sure of me. Go, make money. I have told thee often, and I retell thee again and again, I hate the Moor. My cause is hearted; thine hath no less reason. Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him. If thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport. There are many events in the womb of time, which will be delivered. Traverse, go, provide thy money! We will have more of this tomorrow. Adieu.

RODERIGO Where shall we meet i' th' morning?

IAGO At my lodging.

RODERIGO I'll be with thee betimes.

IAGO Go to, farewell. - Do you hear, Roderigo?

RODERIGO I'll sell all my land. *Exit.*

IAGO

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
If I would time expend with such a snipe
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor,

352 *delicate* pleasant; *Make* raise 353 *sanctimony* holiness (here false virtue or faithfulness?) 354 *erring* wandering 356 *A pox* of i.e., "a curse on," "to hell with" (*pox*=venereal disease) 357 *clean out of the way* i.e., out of the question 357-59 *Seek thou . . . without her* i.e., risk death in trying to win her rather than die and have no chance 360 *fast* faithful 360-61 *depend on the issue* i.e., wait to see the outcome 364 *hearted* i.e., lodged deep in my heart 365 *conjunctive* united 366 *cuckold him* commit adultery with his wife 368 *Traverse* i.e., get moving, onward 372 *betimes* early 373 *Go to* (conventional expression of impatience or agreement - "all right, then" or "you see") 377 *snipe* dupe, fool

And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
H'as done my office. I know not if 't be true,
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety. He holds me well;
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio's a proper man. Let me see now:
To get his place, and to plume up my will
In double knavery - How, how? - Let's see: -
After some time, to abuse Othello's ears
That he is too familiar with his wife.

He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected - framed to make women false.
The Moor is of a free and open nature
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;
And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
As asses are.
I have't! It is engendered! Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.
[Exit.]



II.1 Enter Montano and two Gentlemen.

MONTANO
What from the cape can you discern at sea?

FIRST GENTLEMAN
Nothing at all: it is a high-wrought flood.
I cannot 'twixt the heaven and the main
Descry a sail.

380 office business (i.e., sexual) 382 holds me well thinks highly of me 384 proper (1) good-looking, (2) dutiful, responsible 385 place position, job; plume up my will i.e., pride myself on getting what I want (to plume is to show self-satisfaction, to preen) 389 dispose manner 391 free unreserved, unsuspicious

II.1 Cyprus, near the harbor 2 high-wrought flood turbulent sea 3 main sea 4 Descry discern, make out

MONTANO
Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud at land;
A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements.
If it hath ruffianed so upon the sea,
What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,
Can hold the mortise? What shall we hear of this?

SECOND [GENTLEMAN]
A segregation of the Turkish fleet.
For do but stand upon the foaming shore,
The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds;
The wind-shaked surge, with high and monstrous
mane,
Seems to cast water on the burning Bear
And quench the Guards of th' ever-fixèd pole.
I never did like molestation view
On the enchafèd flood.

MONTANO If that the Turkish fleet
Be not ensheltered and embayed, they are drowned;
It is impossible to bear it out.
Enter a [third] Gentleman.

THIRD [GENTLEMAN]

News, lads! Our wars are done.
The desperate tempest hath so banged the Turks
That their designment halts. A noble ship of Venice
Hath seen a grievous wrack and sufferance
On most part of their fleet.

MONTANO

How? Is this true?

THIRD [GENTLEMAN] The ship is here put in,

8 ribs of oak curved frame of a ship's hull 9 hold the mortise hold their joints together 10 segregation scattering (i.e., defeat) 12 chidden billow i.e., driven wave (past tense of "chide," to scold or compel by scolding) 13 mane (figuratively the foam of the surge is like a monster's mane; with a pun on "main," sea) 14 burning Bear constellation Ursa Minor 15 Guards . . . pole two attendant stars, known as the "guardians" of the polestar 16 molestation turmoil 17 enchain'd furious, enraged 22 designment halts naval plan limps 23 wrack and sufferance devastation and injury

A Veronesa. Michael Cassio,
Lieutenant to the warlike Moor, Othello,
Is come on shore; the Moor himself at sea,
And is in full commission here for Cyprus.

MONTANO

I am glad on't. 'Tis a worthy governor.

THIRD [GENTLEMAN]

But this same Cassio, though he speak of comfort
Touching the Turkish loss, yet he looks sadly
And prays the Moor be safe, for they were parted
With foul and violent tempest.

MONTANO Pray heavens he be;
For I have served him, and the man commands
Like a full soldier. Let's to the seaside - ho! -
As well to see the vessel that's come in
As to throw out our eyes for brave Othello,
Even till we make the main and th' aerial blue
An indistinct regard.

GENTLEMAN Come, let's do so;
For every minute is expectancy
Of more arrivance.
Enter Cassio.

CASSIO

Thanks, you the valiant of the warlike isle,
That so approve the Moor! O, let the heavens
Give him defense against the elements,
For I have lost him on a dangerous sea!

MONTANO

Is he well shipped?

CASSIO

His bark is stoutly timbered, and his pilot
Of very expert and approved allowance;

26 *Veronesa* (probably a ship supplied by the city of Verona, but perhaps a particular kind of vessel) 31 *of comfort* i.e., with relief 39-40 *Even till . . . regard* until we can't distinguish the blues of sea and sky 44 *approve* admire, support

Therefore my hopes, not surfeited to death,
Stand in bold cure.

[VOICES] (*Within*) A sail, a sail, a sail!

CASSIO

What noise?

GENTLEMAN

The town is empty; on the brow o' th' sea
Stand ranks of people, and they cry "A sail!"

CASSIO

My hopes do shape him for the governor.

[*A shot.*]

GENTLEMAN

They do discharge their shot of courtesy:
Our friends at least.

CASSIO I pray you, sir, go forth
And give us truth who 'tis that is arrived.

GENTLEMAN

I shall. *Exit.*

MONTANO

But, good lieutenant, is your general wived?

CASSIO

Most fortunately. He hath achieved a maid
That paragon's description and wild fame;
One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens,
And in th' essential vesture of creation
Does tire the ingener.

Enter Gentleman.

How now? Who has put in?

GENTLEMAN

'Tis one Iago, ancient to the general.

50-51 *my hopes . . . bold cure* i.e., since I haven't allowed myself to hope too much (*hopes, not surfeited to death*), the chances of my getting my wish are good (*Stand in bold cure*) 55 *My . . . governor* i.e., "I hope this is Othello's ship" 62 *paragons . . . fame* surpasses the wildest praise 63 *quirks* turns of phrase; *blazoning* descriptive (with the suggestion of praise) 64-65 *essential vesture . . . ingener* i.e., her native excellence wearies the would-be inventor (*ingener*) of praise

CASSIO

H'as had most favorable and happy speed:
Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,
The guttered rocks and congregated sands,
Traitors ensteeped to enclog the guiltless keel,
As having sense of beauty, do omit
Their mortal natures, letting go safely by
The divine Desdemona.

MONTANO What is she?

CASSIO

She that I spake of, our great captain's captain,
Left in the conduct of the bold Iago,
Whose footing here anticipates our thoughts
A sennight's speed. Great Jove, Othello guard,
And swell his sail with thine own pow'rful breath,
That he may bless this bay with his tall ship,
Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms,
Give renewed fire to our extincted spirits,
And bring all Cyprus comfort!

Enter Desdemona, Iago, Roderigo, and Emilia [with Attendants]. O, behold!

The riches of the ship is come on shore!
You men of Cyprus, let her have your knees.
Hail to thee, lady! and the grace of heaven,
Before, behind thee, and on every hand,
Enwheel thee round!

DESDEMONA I thank you, valiant Cassio.
What tidings can you tell me of my lord?

CASSIO

He is not yet arrived, nor know I aught
But that he's well and will be shortly here.

67 happy speed good fortune (as well as pace) 69 guttered grooved, jagged 70 ensteeped submerged 72 mortal
deadly 76 footing landing 77 sen-night's week's 79-80 That . . . Make love's quick pants i.e., that he may
experience the rapid breathing of joyous love 81 extincted extinguished,
dampened 84 let her have your knees i.e., bow to her

DESDEMONA

O but I fear! How lost you company?

CASSIO

The great contention of sea and skies
Parted our fellowship.

[VOICES] (*Within*) A sail, a sail! [*A shot.*]

CASSIO But hark. A sail!

GENTLEMAN

They give their greeting to the citadel;

This likewise is a friend.

CASSIO See for the news.

[Exit Gentleman.]

Good ancient, you are welcome.

[To Emilia] Welcome, mistress. -

Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,
That I extend my manners. 'Tis my breeding
That gives me this bold show of courtesy.

[Kisses Emilia.]

IAGO

Sir, would she give you so much of her lips
As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,
You would have enough.

DESDEMONA Alas, she has no speech!

IAGO

In faith, too much.
I find it still when I have leave to sleep.
Marry, before your ladyship, I grant,
She puts her tongue a little in her heart
And chides with thinking.

EMILIA

You have little cause to say so.

98 extend my manners i.e., as far as Emilia 99 s.d. Kisses Emilia (a social custom among the Elizabethans)
101 tongue (in the sense of scolding) 104 still always (i.e., even); have leave am allowed (and should be able) 106-7 She puts . . . thinking i.e., she scolds me silently

IAGO

Come on, come on! You are pictures out of door,
Bells in your parlors, wildcats in your kitchens,
Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,
Players in your huswifery, and huswives in your beds.

DESDEMONA

O, fie upon thee, slanderer!

IAGO

Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk:
You rise to play, and go to bed to work.

EMILIA

You shall not write my praise.

IAGO No, let me not.

DESDEMONA

What wouldst write of me, if thou shouldst praise me?

IAGO

O gentle lady, do not put me to't,

For I am nothing if not critical.

DESDEMONA

Come on, assay. - There's one gone to the harbor?

IAGO

Ay, madam.

DESDEMONA

I am not merry; but I do beguile

The thing I am by seeming otherwise. -

Come, how wouldst thou praise me?

IAGO

I am about it; but indeed my invention

110 *Bells* i.e., noisemakers 111 *Saints in your injuries* i.e., pretenders of innocence when harming others 112 *Players in your huswifery* actors (i.e., not real workers at your housekeeping); *huswives in your beds* i.e., (1) in control of your husbands, (2) hussies, wantons 120 *assay* try 122 *beguile* charm away 123 *The thing I am* i.e., my nervousness about my husband's arrival 125 *invention* idea (i.e., the praise)

Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frieze -

It plucks out brains and all. But my muse labors,

And thus she is delivered:

If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit -

The one's for use, the other useth it.

DESDEMONA

Well praised! How if she be black and witty?

IAGO

If she be black, and thereto have a wit,

She'll find a white that shall her blackness fit.

DESDEMONA

Worse and worse!

EMILIA

How if fair and foolish?

IAGO

She never yet was foolish that was fair,

For even her folly helped her to an heir.

DESDEMONA These are old fond paradoxes to make
fools laugh i' th' alehouse. What miserable praise hast
thou for her that's foul and foolish?

IAGO

There's none so foul, and foolish thereunto,

But does foul pranks which fair and wise ones do.

DESDEMONA O heavy ignorance! Thou praisest the worst best. But what praise
couldst thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed - one that in the authority of
her merit did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself ?

126 *pate* head; as *birdlime* . . . *frieze* with as much difficulty as getting *birdlime* (a sticky white paste used to trap birds) out of *frieze* (a coarse woolen cloth) 131 *black* brunet or dark-complexioned 133 *find a white* . . . *fit* (a complex pun: *white* = “wight” or “man,” but also the “white” was the center of a target - i.e., “she’ll find a matching fair-skinned man who likes her dark skin”) 137 *folly* sexual looseness (as well as foolishness) 138 *fond* foolish 140 *foul* ugly 143 *heavy* grievous 146 *put on the vouch* win the approval

IAGO

She that was ever fair, and never proud;
Had tongue at will, and yet was never loud;
Never lacked gold, and yet went never gay;
Fled from her wish, and yet said “Now I may”;
She that, being angered, her revenge being nigh,
Bade her wrong stay, and her displeasure fly;
She that in wisdom never was so frail
To change the cod’s head for the salmon’s tail;
She that could think, and ne’er disclose her mind;
See suitors following, and not look behind:
She was a wight (if ever such wights were) -

DESDEMONA To do what?

IAGO

To suckle fools and chronicle small beer.

DESDEMONA O most lame and impotent conclusion! Do not learn of him, Emilia, though he be thy husband. How say you, Cassio? Is he not a most profane and liberal counselor?

CASSIO He speaks home, madam. You may relish him more in the soldier than in the scholar.

IAGO [*Aside*] He takes her by the palm. Ay, well said, whisper! With as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do! I will gyve thee in thine own courtship. - You say true; ’tis so, indeed! - If such tricks as these strip you out of your lieu-tenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your

150 *gay* extravagantly dressed 151 *Fled* . . . *I may* i.e., did not allow herself to do what she could have 153 *Bade her* . . . *fly* i.e., put up with her trouble and dismissed her anger about it 155 *To change* . . . *tail* i.e., not so foolish (*never* . . . *so frail*) as to exchange something worthless - *the cod’s head* - for something precious - *the salmon’s tail* [*cod* [scrotum] and *tail* also have sexual connotations) 158 *wight* person 160 *suckle* take care of; *chronicle small beer* keep a tally of trivialities 163-64 *profane and liberal* lewd and free-talking 165 *home* bluntly 167 *well said* i.e., well done, good work 169-70 *gyve thee* chain you up, entrap you

three fingers so oft - which now again you are most apt to play the sir in. Very good! well kissed! and excellent courtesy! ’Tis so, indeed. Yet again your fingers to your lips? Would they were clyster pipes for your sake! [*Trumpet within.*] The Moor! I know his trumpet.

CASSIO ’Tis truly so.

DESDEMONA Let’s meet him and receive him.

CASSIO Lo, where he comes.

Enter Othello and Attendants.

OTHELLO

O my fair warrior!

DESDEMONA My dear Othello!

OTHELLO

It gives me wonder great as my content
To see you here before me. O my soul's joy!
If after every tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have wakened death!
And let the laboring bark climb hills of seas
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven! If it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

DESDEMONA The heavens forbid
But that our loves and comforts should increase
Even as our days do grow.

OTHELLO Amen to that, sweet powers!
I cannot speak enough of this content;
It stops me here; it is too much of joy.
And this, and this, the greatest discords be
[They kiss.]
That e'er our hearts shall make!

174 *play the sir* in act the courtier 176 *clyster pipes* tubes for enemas or vaginal insertions 188 *If it were now* if it were now my fate 189 *happy* fortunate 191 *comfort* satisfaction 196 *here* (presumably he indicates his heart)

IAGO *[Aside]* O, you are well tuned now!
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
As honest as I am.

OTHELLO Come, let us to the castle.
News, friends! Our wars are done; the Turks are
drowned.
How does my old acquaintance of this isle? -
Honey, you shall be well desired in Cyprus;
I have found great love amongst them. O my sweet,
I prattle out of fashion, and I dote
In mine own comforts. I prithee, good Iago,
Go to the bay and disembark my coffers.
Bring thou the master to the citadel;
He is a good one, and his worthiness
Does challenge much respect. - Come, Desdemona,
Once more well met at Cyprus.
Exit Othello and Desdemona
[with all but Iago and Roderigo].

IAGO [*To an Attendant going out*] Do thou meet me presently at the harbor. [*To Roderigo*] Come hither. If thou be'st valiant (as they say base men being in love have then a nobility in their natures more than is native to them), list me. The lieutenant tonight watches on the court of guard. First, I must tell thee this: Desdemona is directly in love with him.

RODERIGO With him? Why, 'tis not possible.

IAGO Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed. Mark me with what violence she first loved the Moor, but for bragging and telling her fantastical lies. To love him still for prating? Let not thy discreet heart think it. Her eye must be fed; and what delight shall she have to

199 *set down* i.e., loosen, untune 203 *well desired* sought after, welcomed 205 *out of fashion* i.e., as I shouldn't at this time 207 *disembark my coffers* bring my luggage ashore (*coffers* = trunks) 208 *master* i.e., ship master 210 *challenge* demand, deserve 216 *list* listen to 216-17 *watches* . . . *guard* i.e., is on duty with the *corps de garde*, the patrol assigned to headquarters 220 *thus* i.e., on your lips, for silence 223 *discreet* discerning

look on the devil? When the blood is made dull with the act of sport, there should be, again to inflame it and to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in favor, sympathy in years, manners, and beauties; all which the Moor is defective in. Now for want of these required conveniences, her delicate tenderness will find itself abused, begin to heave the gorge, disrelish and abhor the Moor. Very nature will instruct her in it and compel her to some second choice. Now sir, this granted - as it is a most pregnant and unforced position - who stands so eminent in the degree of this fortune as Cassio does? A knave very voluble; no further conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming for the better compass of his salt and most hidden loose affection? Why, none! why, none! A slipper and subtle knave, a finder of occasion, that has an eye can stamp and counterfeit advantages, though true advantage never present itself; a devilish knave! Besides, the knave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after. A pestilent complete knave! and the woman hath found him already.

RODERIGO I cannot believe that in her; she's full of most blessed condition.

IAGO Blessed fig's-end! The wine she drinks is made of grapes. If she had been blessed, she would never have loved the Moor. Blessed pudding! Didst thou not see

225 *the devil* (traditionally represented as dark) 226 *act of sport* i.e., copulation 227 *favor* appearance, especially of the face 230 *conveniences* points of agreement (literally, "comings together") 231 *heave the gorge* vomit 234 *pregnant* apparent 236 *voluble* smooth-talking (also "inconstant") 236- 39 *no . . . affection* i.e., his conscience requires him to do no more than to assume good manners (*form of civil and humane seeming*) in order to succeed sexually (*salt*=salacious, sexy) 239 *slipper* slippery 240 *finder of occasion* i.e., an opportunist 241 *stamp* . . . *advantages* invent opportunities by fraudulent (*counterfeit*) means 244 *green* young, naive; *look after* i.e., go for 248 *blessed condition* holy character 249 *fig's-end* (a crude turn on the preceding phrase; see I.3.319) 251 *pudding* sausage

her paddle with the palm of his hand? Didst not mark that?

RODERIGO Yes, that I did; but that was but courtesy.

IAGO Lechery, by this hand! an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts. They met so near with their lips that their breaths

embraced together. Villainous thoughts, Roderigo! When these mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise, th' incorporate conclusion. Pish! But, sir, be you ruled by me: I have brought you from Venice. Watch you tonight. For the command, I'll lay't upon you. Cassio knows you not. I'll not be far from you: do you find some occasion to anger Cassio, either by speaking too loud, or tainting his discipline, or from what other course you please which the time shall more favorably minister.

RODERIGO Well.

IAGO Sir, he's rash and very sudden in choler, and haply may strike at you. Provoke him that he may; for even out of that will I cause these of Cyprus to mutiny; whose qualification shall come into no true taste again but by the displanting of Cassio. So shall you have a shorter journey to your desires by the means I shall then have to prefer them; and the impediment most profitably removed without the which there were no expectation of our prosperity.

255 *an index* a table of contents; *obscure* hidden, secret 258-60 *mutualities* . . . *conclusion* polite exchanges (*mutualities*) initiate a figurative parade, with hand-kissing as those who lead (*marshal the way*) followed immediately (*hard at hand*) by the main event (*master and main exercise*), the sexual act (*incorporate conclusion*) 261 *Pish* (expression of disgust) 262 *Watch you* i.e., you join the watch 263 *lay't upon you* i.e., arrange for your participation 265 *tainting his discipline* belittling his professionalism 269 *sudden in choler* quick to anger; *haply* perhaps 270 *Provoke* . . . *may* i.e., do something to ensure that he will 271 *mutiny* riot 272 *qualification* . . . *taste* (a drinking metaphor concerning diluted or altered wine; i.e., the disturbed Cypriots won't be back to normal until Cassio is fired) 275 *prefer* advance

RODERIGO I will do this if you can bring it to any opportunity.

IAGO I warrant thee. Meet me by and by at the citadel; I must fetch his necessaries ashore. Farewell.

RODERIGO Adieu. *Exit*.

IAGO

That Cassio loves her, I do well believe't;
That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit.
The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband. Now I do love her too;
Not out of absolute lust, though peradventure
I stand accountant for as great a sin,
But partly led to diet my revenge,
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leaped into my seat, the thought whereof
Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards,
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am evened with him, wife for wife;
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgment cannot cure. Which thing to do,

If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trace
For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,
I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb
(For I fear Cassio with my nightcap too),
Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me
For making him egregiously an ass

284 apt likely; of great credit easily credible 290 accountant accountable 291 diet feed, nourish 293 leaped into my seat i.e., done my (sexual) job 300 trace pursue (with a pun on trash earlier in the line) 301 For his quick hunting i.e., because he goes after what I tell him to; stand the putting on tolerates my using him as I do 302 on the hip i.e., where I want him (term from wrestling) 303 rank garb nasty fashion 306 egregiously exceptionally, spectacularly

And practicing upon his peace and quiet
Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confused:
Knavery's plain face is never seen till used. *Exit.*



II.2 Enter Othello's Herald, with a proclamation.

HERALD It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that, upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph; some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addition leads him. For, besides these beneficial news, it is the celebration of his nuptial. So much was his pleasure should be proclaimed. All offices are open, and there is full liberty of feasting from this present hour of five till the bell have told eleven. Heaven bless the isle of Cyprus and our noble general Othello! *Exit.*



II.3 Enter Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, and Attendants.

OTHELLO

Good Michael, look you to the guard tonight.
Let's teach ourselves that honorable stop,
Not to outsport discretion.

CASSIO

Iago hath direction what to do;
But notwithstanding, with my personal eye
Will I look to't.

OTHELLO Iago is most honest.

307 practicing upon plotting against 308 yet so far II.2 Cyprus, a public area 3 mere perdition total loss 6 addition rank, position 8 offices military storehouses 10 told tolled (with pun on "tell" = count)

II.3 The area in front of the Cyprian castle 3 outpost overrun, violate

Michael, good night. Tomorrow with your earliest
Let me have speech with you.

[To Desdemona] Come, my dear love.

The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue;
That profit's yet to come 'tween me and you. -
Good night.

Exit [Othello with Desdemona and Attendants].

Enter Iago.

CASSIO Welcome, Iago. We must to the watch.

IAGO Not this hour, lieutenant; 'tis not yet ten o' th' clock. Our general cast us
thus early for the love of his Desdemona, who let us not therefore blame. He
hath not yet made wanton the night with her, and she is sport for Jove.

CASSIO She's a most exquisite lady.

IAGO And, I'll warrant her, full of game.

CASSIO Indeed, she's a most fresh and delicate creature.

IAGO What an eye she has! Methinks it sounds a parley to provocation.

CASSIO An inviting eye, and yet methinks right modest.

IAGO And when she speaks, is it not an alarum to love?

CASSIO She is indeed perfection.

IAGO Well, happiness to their sheets! Come, lieutenant, I have a stoup of wine,
and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants that would fain have a measure
to the health of black Othello.

CASSIO Not tonight, good Iago. I have very poor and unhappy brains for
drinking. I could well wish courtesy would invent some other custom of
entertainment.

IAGO O, they are our friends. But one cup! I'll drink for you.

7 with your earliest at your earliest convenience 14 cast dismissed, "cast us off" 19 full of
game i.e., sexually eager 21-22 a parley to provocation a signal to a sexual encounter (a
military metaphor) 24 an alarum a call (again, a military signal) 27 stoup tankard,
container; brace pair 28 would . . . measure desire to drink a toast

CASSIO I have drunk but one cup tonight, and that was craftily qualified too,
and behold what innovation it makes here. I am unfortunate in the infirmity
and dare not task my weakness with any more.

IAGO What, man! 'Tis a night of revels: the gallants desire it.

CASSIO Where are they?

IAGO Here at the door; I pray you call them in.

CASSIO I'll do't, but it dislikes me. *Exit.*

IAGO

If I can fasten but one cup upon him
With that which he hath drunk tonight already,
He'll be as full of quarrel and offense
As my young mistress' dog. Now my sick fool
Roderigo,
Whom love hath turned almost the wrong side out,
To Desdemona hath tonight caroused
Potations pottle-deep; and he's to watch.
Three else of Cyprus - noble swelling spirits,
That hold their honors in a wary distance,
The very elements of this warlike isle -
Have I tonight flustered with flowing cups,
And they watch too. Now, 'mongst this flock of drunkards
Am I to put our Cassio in some action
That may offend the isle.

Enter Cassio, Montano, and Gentlemen [with Servants bringing wine].

But here they come.

If consequence do but approve my dream,
My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream.

36 *craftily qualified* carefully diluted; *innovation* disturbance, revolution 38 *task* endanger, overtax 49-50 *caroused* / *Potations pottle-deep* drunk gulps to the bottom of the *pottle* or cup 51 *else* others; *swelling* proud 52 *hold . . . distance* are vain and sensitive about their honor 53 *very elements* i.e., the proud soldiers represent the essential defensiveness of the islanders 58 *consequence* what follows; *approve* bear out

CASSIO 'Fore God, they have given me a rouse already.

MONTANO Good faith, a little one; not past a pint, as I am a soldier.

IAGO Some wine, ho!

[Sings.]

And let me the cannikin clink, clink;

And let me the cannikin clink.

A soldier's a man;

O man's life's but a span,

Why then, let a soldier drink.

Some wine, boys!

CASSIO 'Fore God, an excellent song!

IAGO I learned it in England, where indeed they are most potent in potting.
Your Dane, your German, and your swagbellied Hollander - Drink, ho! - are
nothing to your English.

CASSIO Is your Englishman so exquisite in his drinking?

IAGO Why, he drinks you with facility your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to
overthrow your Almain; he gives your Hollander a vomit ere the next pottle can

be filled.

CASSIO To the health of our general!

MONTANO I am for it, lieutenant, and I'll do you justice.

IAGO O sweet England!

[Sings.]

King Stephen was and-a worthy peer,
His breeches cost him but a crown;
He held them sixpence all too dear,
With that he called the tailor lown.
He was a wight of high renown,
And thou art but of low degree.

60 a rouse a carouse (i.e., a drink) 64 *cannikin* (diminutive of "can"); *clink* i.e., against another in a toast 73 *swagbellied* with a stomach draped over the belt 75 *exquisite* (1) accomplished, (2) extreme 76 *with facility* easily 77 *Almain* German (French *Allemagne*, Germany) 78 *gives . . . vomit* i.e., causes the Dutchman to throw up 86 *lown* rascal, lout

'Tis pride that pulls the country down;
Then take thine auld cloak about thee.
Some wine, ho!

CASSIO 'Fore God, this is a more exquisite song than the other.

IAGO Will you hear't again?

CASSIO No, for I hold him to be unworthy of his place that does those things.
Well, God's above all; and there be souls must be saved, and there be souls
must not be saved.

IAGO It's true, good lieutenant.

CASSIO For mine own part - no offense to the general, nor any man of quality -
I hope to be saved.

IAGO And so do I too, lieutenant.

CASSIO Ay, but, by your leave, not before me. The lieutenant is to be saved
before the ancient. Let's have no more of this; let's to our affairs. - God forgive
us our sins! - Gentlemen, let's look to our business. Do not think, gentlemen, I
am drunk. This is my ancient; this is my right hand, and this is my left. I am not
drunk now. I can stand well enough, and I speak well enough.

GENTLEMEN Excellent well!

CASSIO Why, very well then. You must not think then that I am drunk. *Exit.*

MONTANO

To th' platform, masters. Come, let's set the watch.

[Exeunt some Gentlemen.]

IAGO

You see this fellow that is gone before.
He's a soldier fit to stand by Caesar

And give direction, and do but see his vice.
'Tis to his virtue a just equinox,
The one as long as th' other. 'Tis pity of him.

90 *ould* old *96* *does those things* behaves in that way *101* *man of quality* person of high rank or station *114* *fellow* person (but sometimes, perhaps here, with a contemptuous undertone); *is gone before* just left *117* *just equinox* precise equivalent

I fear the trust Othello puts him in,
On some odd time of his infirmity,
Will shake this island.

MONTANO But is he often thus?

IAGO
'Tis evermore his prologue to his sleep:
He'll watch the horologe a double set
If drink rock not his cradle.

MONTANO It were well
The general were put in mind of it.
Perhaps he sees it not, or his good nature
Prizes the virtue that appears in Cassio
And looks not on his evils. Is not this true?
Enter Roderigo.

IAGO [*Aside to him*]
How now, Roderigo?
I pray you after the lieutenant, go! [*Exit Roderigo.*]

MONTANO
And 'tis great pity that the noble Moor
Should hazard such a place as his own second
With one of an engrafted infirmity.
It were an honest action to say
So to the Moor.

IAGO Not I, for this fair island!
I do love Cassio well and would do much
To cure him of this evil.

[VOICE] (*Within*) Help! help!

IAGO But hark! What noise?
Enter Cassio pursuing Roderigo.

CASSIO
Zounds, you rogue! you rascal!

MONTANO
What's the matter, lieutenant?

123-24 *watch* . . . *cradle* stay awake twice around the clock unless he has a drink (i.e., Cassio can't sleep without drinking first) *133* *an engrafted* a built-in

CASSIO A knave teach me my duty?
I'll beat the knave into a twiggen bottle.

RODERIGO
Beat me?

CASSIO Dost thou prate, rogue?
[Strikes Roderigo.]

MONTANO Nay, good lieutenant!
[Stays Cassio.]
I pray you, sir, hold your hand.

CASSIO Let me go, sir,
Or I'll knock you o'er the mazard.

MONTANO Come, come, you're
drunk!

CASSIO Drunk?
[They fight.]

IAGO *[Aside to Roderigo]*
Away, I say! Go out and cry a mutiny! *[Exit Roderigo.]*
Nay, good lieutenant. God's will, gentlemen!
[A bell rung.]
Help, ho! - lieutenant - sir - Montano!
Help, masters! - Here's a goodly watch indeed!
Who's that which rings the bell? Diablo, ho!
The town will rise. God's will, lieutenant, hold!
You'll be ashamed forever.
Enter Othello and Attendants.

OTHELLO What is the matter here?

MONTANO
Zounds, I bleed still. I am hurt to th' death.
He dies!

OTHELLO
Hold for your lives!

IAGO
Hold, ho! Lieutenant - sir - Montano - gentlemen!

140 twiggen bottle wicker-covered bottle (i.e., Cassio threatens crisscross stripes on his victim's skin) 143 mazard head 149 Diablo devil (an oath) 150 rise i.e., rise up, riot

Have you forgot all place of sense and duty?
Hold! The general speaks to you. Hold, for shame!

OTHELLO
Why, how now, ho? From whence ariseth this?
Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that

Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?
For Christian shame put by this barbarous brawl!
He that stirs next to carve for his own rage
Holds his soul light; he dies upon his motion.
Silence that dreadful bell! It frights the isle
From her propriety. What is the matter, masters?
Honest Iago, that looks dead with grieving,
Speak. Who began this? On thy love, I charge thee.

IAGO

I do not know. Friends all, but now, even now,
In quarter, and in terms like bride and groom
Devesting them for bed; and then, but now -
As if some planet had unwitting men -
Swords out, and tilting one at others' breasts
In opposition bloody. I cannot speak
Any beginning to this peevish odds,
And would in action glorious I had lost
Those legs that brought me to a part of it!

OTHELLO

How comes it, Michael, you are thus forgot?

CASSIO

I pray you pardon me. I cannot speak.

OTHELLO

Worthy Montano, you were wont to be civil;
The gravity and stillness of your youth
The world hath noted, and your name is great

159 *Are . . . turned Turks* have we become barbarous (proverbial in the period) 160 *hath forbid the Ottomites* i.e., to defeat ourselves (which they could not) 162 *carve for his own rage* indulge his anger 163 *Holds his soul light* doesn't value his own soul (i.e., will die) 165 *propriety* proper state (i.e., calm) 169 *quarter* conduct toward; *terms* language 172 *tilting* aiming, thrusting 174 *peevish odds* headstrong, childish strife

In mouths of wisest censure. What's the matter
That you unlace your reputation thus
And spend your rich opinion for the name
Of a night brawler? Give me answer to it.

MONTANO

Worthy Othello, I am hurt to danger.
Your officer, Iago, can inform you,
While I spare speech, which something now offends me,
Of all that I do know; nor know I aught
By me that's said or done amiss this night,
Unless self-charity be sometimes a vice,
And to defend ourselves it be a sin
When violence assails us.

OTHELLO Now, by heaven,

My blood begins my safer guides to rule,
 And passion, having my best judgment collied,
 Assays to lead the way. Zounds, if I stir
 Or do but lift this arm, the best of you
 Shall sink in my rebuke. Give me to know
 How this foul rout began, who set it on,
 And he that is approved in this offense,
 Though he had twinned with me, both at a birth,
 Shall lose me. What! in a town of war,
 Yet wild, the people's hearts brimful of fear,
 To manage private and domestic quarrel?
 In night, and on the court and guard of safety?
 'Tis monstrous. Iago, who began't?

MONTANO

If partially affined, or leagued in office,
 Thou dost deliver more or less than truth,

182 *censure* judgment 183 *unlace* undo, remove 184 *spend your rich opinion* squander your reputation 188 *something now offends me* i.e., somewhat pains me, is difficult for me 191 *self-charity* self-protection 194 *blood passion* (as elsewhere in the play) 195 *collied* darkened, obscured (covered with coal dust?) 200 *approved in* found guilty of 204 *manage* conduct 207 *partially* . . . office bound by partiality or soldierly affiliation

Thou art no soldier.

IAGO Touch me not so near.

I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth
 Than it should do offense to Michael Cassio;
 Yet I persuade myself, to speak the truth
 Shall nothing wrong him. This it is, general.
 Montano and myself being in speech,
 There comes a fellow crying out for help
 And Cassio following him with determined sword
 To execute upon him. Sir, this gentleman
 Steps in to Cassio and entreats his pause.
 Myself the crying fellow did pursue,
 Lest by his clamor (as it so fell out)
 The town might fall in fright. He, swift of foot,
 Outran my purpose; and I returned then rather
 For that I heard the clink and fall of swords,
 And Cassio high in oath; which till tonight
 I ne'er might say before. When I came back -
 For this was brief - I found them close together
 At blow and thrust, even as again they were
 When you yourself did part them.
 More of this matter cannot I report.
 But men are men; the best sometimes forget.
 Though Cassio did some little wrong to him,
 As men in rage strike those that wish them best,
 Yet surely Cassio I believe received

From him that fled some strange indignity,
Which patience could not pass.

OTHELLO I know, Iago,
Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,
Making it light to Cassio. Cassio, I love thee,

209 Touch charge 217 execute upon take action against 224 high in oath in a fit of cursing 235 pass i.e., pass over, let go by 236 love i.e., affection for your colleague; mince reduce, minimize 237 love respect and feel affection for

But never more be officer of mine.
Enter Desdemona, attended.
Look if my gentle love be not raised up!
I'll make thee an example.

DESDEMONA
What is the matter, dear?

OTHELLO All's well, sweeting.
Come away to bed. *[To Montano]* Sir, for your hurts,
Myself will be your surgeon. Lead him off.
[Montano is led off.]

Iago, look with care about the town
And silence those whom this vile brawl distracted.
Come, Desdemona, 'tis the soldiers' life
To have their balmy slumbers waked with strife.
Exit [with all but Iago and Cassio].

IAGO What, are you hurt, lieutenant?

CASSIO Ay, past all surgery.

IAGO Marry, God forbid!

CASSIO Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!

IAGO As I am an honest man, I had thought you had received some bodily wound. There is more sense in that than in reputation. Reputation is an idle and most false imposition, oft got without merit and lost without deserving. You have lost no reputation at all unless you repute yourself such a loser. What, man! there are more ways to recover the general again. You are but now cast in his mood - a punishment more in policy than in

241 sweeting sweetheart 245 distracted excited, disturbed 256 sense material reality 258 imposition something imposed from without 261 recover the general i.e., recuperate your standing with Othello 261-62 cast in his mood dismissed owing to his anger 262 in policy i.e., a strategic punishment

malice, even so as one would beat his offenseless dog to affright an imperious lion. Sue to him again, and he's yours.

CASSIO I will rather sue to be despised than to deceive so good a commander with so slight, so drunken, and so indiscreet an officer. Drunk! and speak

parrot! and squabble! swagger! swear! and discourse fustian with one's own shadow! O thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil!

IAGO What was he that you followed with your sword? What had he done to you?

CASSIO I know not.

IAGO Is't possible?

CASSIO I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly; a quarrel, but nothing wherefore. O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! that we should with joy, pleasance, revel, and applause transform ourselves into beasts!

IAGO Why, but you are now well enough. How came you thus recovered?

CASSIO It hath pleased the devil drunkenness to give place to the devil wrath. One unperfectness shows me another, to make me frankly despise myself.

IAGO Come, you are too severe a moraler. As the time, the place, and the condition of this country stands, I could heartily wish this had not befall'n; but since it is as it is, mend it for your own good.

CASSIO I will ask him for my place again: he shall tell me I am a drunkard! Had I as many mouths as Hydra, such

263-64 *beat* . . . *lion* i.e., make an example of you to frighten others 264 *imperious* powerful; *Sue* to petition 268 *speak* parrot babble idiotically 269 *discourse fustian* speak bombastic nonsense 278 *nothing wherefore* not why 281 *applause* approval (i.e., social approbation) 285 *unperfectness* failing 292 *Hydra* the legendary multiheaded monster

an answer would stop them all. To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast! O strange! Every inordinate cup is unblessed, and the ingredient is a devil.

IAGO Come, come, good wine is a good familiar creature if it be well used. Exclaim no more against it. And, good lieutenant, I think you think I love you.

CASSIO I have well approved it, sir. I drunk!

IAGO You or any man living may be drunk at a time, man. I tell you what you shall do. Our general's wife is now the general. I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and denotement of her parts and graces. Confess yourself freely to her; importune her help to put you in your place again. She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than she is requested. This broken joint between you and her husband entreat her to splinter; and my fortunes against any lay worth naming, this crack of your love shall grow stronger than it was before.

CASSIO You advise me well.

IAGO I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness.

CASSIO I think it freely; and betimes in the morning I will beseech the virtuous

Desdemona to undertake for me. I am desperate of my fortunes if they check me here.

295 *inordinate* immoderate **297-98** *familiar creature* friendly thing (but with pun on *familiar* in the sense of an evil spirit) **300** *approved* demonstrated, proved **302-3** *general's wife* . . . *general* i.e., Desdemona rules her husband **305** *parts* gifts, abilities **307** *free* generous **310-11** *entreat her to splinter* i.e., ask her to set with a splint **311** *lay* wager **312** *crack of division* in **315** *protest* affirm **318-19** *undertake for me* take up my plea **319** *desperate of my fortunes* in despair about my future; *check me* stop me

IAGO You are in the right. Good night, lieutenant; I must to the watch.

CASSIO Good night, honest Iago. *Exit Cassio.*

IAGO

And what's he then that says I play the villain,
When this advice is free I give and honest,
Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
Th' inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit; she's framed as fruitful
As the free elements. And then for her
To win the Moor - were't to renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin -
His soul is so enfeathered to her love
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function. How am I then a villain
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
When devils will the blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now. For whiles this honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortune,
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear,
That she repeals him for her body's lust;
And by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net

326 *Probal* plausible **328** *subdue* convince **329** *fruitful* generous **331-32** *were't . . . redeemed sin* i.e., she could make him go as far as to renounce his faith **333** *enfeathered* bound, enslaved **335-36** *Even as . . . weak function* i.e., he is helpless to deny whatever she wants **337** *parallel* similar, related **338** *Divinity* theology **339** *put on* bring about **342** *Plies* petitions **345** *repeals* i.e., tries to get him reinstated (literally, "recalls")

That shall enmesh them all.

Enter Roderigo. How, now, Roderigo?

RODERIGO I do follow here in the chase, not like a hound that hunts, but one that fills up the cry. My money is almost spent; I have been tonight exceedingly well cudged; and I think the issue will be - I shall have so much experience

for my pains, and so, with no money at all, and a little more wit, return again to Venice.

IAGO

How poor are they that have not patience!
What wound did ever heal but by degrees?
Thou know'st we work by wit and not by witchcraft,
And wit depends on dilatory time.
Does't not go well? Cassio hath beaten thee,
And thou by that small hurt hast cashiered Cassio.
Though other things grow fair against the sun,
Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe.
Content thyself awhile. By the mass, 'tis morning!
Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.
Retire thee; go where thou art billeted.
Away, I say! Thou shalt know more hereafter.
Nay, get thee gone! *Exit Roderigo.*
Two things are to be done:
My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress -
I'll set her on -
Myself a while to draw the Moor apart
And bring him jump when he may Cassio find
Soliciting his wife. Ay, that's the way!
Dull not device by coldness and delay. *Exit.*

352 cry pack of dogs 354 cudgelled beaten (with a cudgel); issue outcome 359 wit cunning, mind 360 dilatory slow-moving, unfolding 362 cashiered dismissed (i.e., got him fired) 363-64 *Though . . . ripe* i.e., although it looks as if others are prospering, our plan (*fruits that blossom first*) will soon bear fruit (*first be ripe*) 367 billeted assigned lodging 370 move plead 373 jump just, exactly 375 *Dull not device* don't hold up the scheme



III.1 Enter Cassio, Musicians, and Clown.

CASSIO

Masters, play here, I will content your pains:
Something that's brief; and bid "Good morrow, general."
[They play.]

CLOWN Why, masters, have your instruments been in Naples, that they speak i' th' nose thus?

MUSICIAN How, sir, how?

CLOWN Are these, I pray you, wind instruments?

MUSICIAN Ay, marry, are they, sir.

CLOWN O, thereby hangs a tail.

MUSICIAN Whereby hangs a tale, sir?

CLOWN Marry, sir, by many a wind instrument that I know. But, masters, here's money for you; and the general so likes your music that he desires you,

for love's sake, to make no more noise with it.

MUSICIAN Well, sir, we will not.

CLOWN If you have any music that may not be heard, to't again: but, as they say, to hear music the general does not greatly care.

MUSICIAN We have none such, sir.

CLOWN Then put up your pipes in your bag, for I'll away. Go, vanish into air, away! *Exit Musicians.*

CASSIO Dost thou hear, mine honest friend?

CLOWN No, I hear not your honest friend. I hear you.

CASSIO Prithce keep up thy quillets. There's a poor piece of gold for thee. If the gentlewoman that attends the general's wife be stirring, tell her there's one Cassio entreats her a little favor of speech. Wilt thou do this?

III.1 The grounds of the castle 1 *content your pains* reward you for your labor 3-4 *in Naples . . . thus* i.e., why do your musical instruments whine so (Have they been in Naples, associated with venereal disease, and caught syphilis, thus causing their noses to fall off and produce such a sound?) 6 *wind instruments* (the following lines initiate a series of puns on *wind*, or flatulence, and *tail*) 18 *none such* ("Nonesuch" was the name of a popular tune) 23 *keep up* put away; *quillets* quips, jokes 25 *be stirring* i.e., is moving around, awake

CLOWN She is stirring, sir. If she will stir hither, I shall seem to notify unto her.

CASSIO

Do, good my friend. *Exit Clown.*

Enter Iago. In happy time, Iago.

IAGO

You have not been abed then?

CASSIO

Why, no; the day had broke

Before we parted. I have made bold, Iago,

To send in to your wife. My suit to her

Is that she will to virtuous Desdemona

Procure me some access.

IAGO I'll send her to you presently,

And I'll devise a mean to draw the Moor

Out of the way, that your converse and business

May be more free.

CASSIO

I humbly thank you for't. *Exit [Iago].*

I never knew

A Florentine more kind and honest.

Enter Emilia.

EMILIA

Good morrow, good lieutenant. I am sorry
For your displeasure, but all will sure be well.
The general and his wife are talking of it,
And she speaks for you stoutly. The Moor replies
That he you hurt is of great fame in Cyprus
And great affinity, and that in wholesome wisdom
He might not but refuse you; but he protests he loves
you,

29 *happy* fortunate (i.e., "good to see you") 36 *devise a mean* invent a way

40 *Florentine* . . . *honest* i.e., even my own countrymen aren't so honest (Cassio comes from Florence, Iago from Venice, notorious for trickery) 44

stoutly strongly 46 *great affinity* i.e., is well-connected 46-47 *in wholesome* . . . *refuse you* i.e., common sense forbids him to reinstate you

And needs no other suitor but his likings
To bring you in again.
CASSIO Yet I beseech you,
If you think fit, or that it may be done,
Give me advantage of some brief discourse
With Desdemona alone.
EMILIA Pray you come in.
I will bestow you where you shall have time
To speak your bosom freely.
CASSIO I am much bound to you.
[*Exeunt.*]



III.2 Enter Othello, Iago, and Gentlemen.

OTHELLO
These letters give, Iago, to the pilot
And by him do my duties to the Senate.
That done, I will be walking on the works;
Repair there to me.

IAGO Well, my good lord, I'll do't.

OTHELLO
This fortification, gentlemen, shall we see't?

GENTLEMEN
We'll wait upon your lordship. *Exeunt.*



III.3 Enter Desdemona, Cassio, and Emilia.

DESDEMONA
Be thou assured, good Cassio, I will do

All my abilities in thy behalf.

48 *no . . . likings* i.e., his own inclination would be sufficient by itself 54 *bosom* i.e., inmost feelings

III.2 The grounds of the castle 3 *works* breastworks, fortifications 4 *Repair* return III.3 The grounds of the castle

EMILIA

Good madam, do. I warrant it grieves my husband
As if the cause were his.

DESDEMONA

O, that's an honest fellow. Do not doubt, Cassio,
But I will have my lord and you again
As friendly as you were.

CASSIO Bounteous madam,
Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio,
He's never anything but your true servant.

DESDEMONA

I know't; I thank you. You do love my lord;
You have known him long; and be you well assured
He shall in strangeness stand no farther off
Than in a politic distance.

CASSIO Ay, but, lady,
That policy may either last so long,
Or feed upon such nice and waterish diet,
Or breed itself so out of circumstances,
That, I being absent, and my place supplied,
My general will forget my love and service.

DESDEMONA

Do not doubt that. Before Emilia here
I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee,
If I do vow a friendship, I'll perform it
To the last article. My lord shall never rest;
I'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience;
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;
I'll intermingle everything he does
With Cassio's suit. Therefore be merry, Cassio,
For thy solicitor shall rather die

12 *strangeness* aloofness 13 *Than . . . distance* than wise policy demands 15 *feed . . . diet* i.e., have so little to nourish it 16 *breed . . . circumstances* i.e., get so far away from the original point 17 *place supplied* position filled by someone else 19 *doubt* suspect, fear 23 *watch him tame* i.e., keep him awake until he does what I want 24 *board a shrift* i.e., his dining table will seem a confessional (where he receives spiritual advice)

Than give thy cause away.
Enter Othello and Iago [at a distance].

EMILIA

Madam, here comes my lord.

CASSIO

Madam, I'll take my leave.

DESDEMONA

Why, stay, and hear me speak.

CASSIO

Madam, not now: I am very ill at ease,
Unfit for mine own purposes.

DESDEMONA

Well, do your discretion. *Exit Cassio.*

IAGO

Ha! I like not that.

OTHELLO What dost thou say?

IAGO

Nothing, my lord; or if - I know not what.

OTHELLO

Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?

IAGO

Cassio, my lord? No, sure, I cannot think it,
That he would steal away so guiltylike,
Seeing your coming.

OTHELLO I do believe 'twas he.

DESDEMONA

How now, my lord?

I have been talking with a suitor here,
A man that languishes in your displeasure.

OTHELLO

Who is't you mean?

DESDEMONA

Why, your lieutenant, Cassio. Good my lord,
If I have any grace or power to move you,
His present reconciliation take.

47 *His . . . take immediately restore him to your good graces*

For if he be not one that truly loves you,
That errs in ignorance, and not in cunning,
I have no judgment in an honest face.
I prithee call him back.

OTHELLO Went he hence now?

DESDEMONA

Yes, faith; so humbled

That he hath left part of his grief with me
To suffer with him. Good love, call him back.

OTHELLO

Not now, sweet Desdemon; some other time.

DESDEMONA

But shall't be shortly?

OTHELLO The sooner, sweet, for you.

DESDEMONA

Shall't be tonight at supper?

OTHELLO No, not tonight.

DESDEMONA

Tomorrow dinner then?

OTHELLO I shall not dine at home; I meet the captains at the citadel.

DESDEMONA

Why then, tomorrow night, on Tuesday morn,
On Tuesday noon or night, on Wednesday morn.
I prithee name the time, but let it not
Exceed three days. In faith, he's penitent;
And yet his trespass, in our common reason
(Save that they say the wars must make example
Out of her best), is not almost a fault
T' incur a private check. When shall he come?
Tell me, Othello. I wonder in my soul
What you would ask me that I should deny
Or stand so mamm'ring on. What? Michael Cassio,

64 in . . . reason i.e., looked at by normal standards 66 not almost scarcely 67 a private check even a private reprimand 70 mamm'ring on hesitating about or perhaps stuttering

That came a-wooing with you, and so many a time,
When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,
Hath ta'en your part - to have so much to do
To bring him in? By'r Lady, I could do much -

OTHELLO

Prithee no more. Let him come when he will!
I will deny thee nothing.

DESDEMONA Why, this is not a boon;

'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,
Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit
To your own person. Nay, when I have a suit
Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed,
It shall be full of poise and difficult weight,

And fearful to be granted.

OTHELLO I will deny thee nothing!
Whereon I do beseech thee grant me this,
To leave me but a little to myself.

DESDEMONA
Shall I deny you? No. Farewell, my lord.

OTHELLO
Farewell, my Desdemona: I'll come to thee straight.

DESDEMONA
Emilia, come. - Be as your fancies teach you;
Whate'er you be, I am obedient. *Exit [with Emilia].*

OTHELLO
Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.

IAGO
My noble lord -

74 bring him in i.e., into your favor *76 boon* personal favor (i.e., I'm not asking you to do something for me, but rather for your own good) *79 peculiar* particular, special *81 touch* test *82-83 full . . . granted* i.e., something hard to agree to *88 as . . . you* i.e., as your whims suggest *90 wretch* (a term of affection, but the opposite is also current in the period) *90-91 Perdition . . . thee* i.e., I'll be damned if I don't love you

OTHELLO What dost thou say, Iago?

IAGO
Did Michael Cassio, when you wooed my lady,
Know of your love?

OTHELLO
He did, from first to last. Why dost thou ask?

IAGO
But for a satisfaction of my thought;
No further harm.

OTHELLO Why of thy thought, Iago?

IAGO
I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

OTHELLO
O, yes, and went between us very oft.

IAGO
Indeed?

OTHELLO
Indeed? Ay, indeed! Discern'st thou aught in that?

Is he not honest?

IAGO Honest, my lord?

OTHELLO Honest. Ay, honest.

IAGO

My lord, for aught I know.

OTHELLO

What dost thou think?

IAGO Think, my lord?

OTHELLO Think, my lord?

By heaven, thou echo'st me

As if there were some monster in thy thought

Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:

I heard thee say even now, thou lik'st not that,

When Cassio left my wife. What didst not like?

And when I told thee he was of my counsel

In my whole course of wooing, thou cried'st "Indeed?"

100 went between us i.e., served as a go-between 111 of my counsel my confidant (i.e., knew my plans)

And didst contract and purse thy brow together,

As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain

Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,

Show me thy thought.

IAGO

My lord, you know I love you.

OTHELLO I think thou dost,

And, for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty

And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,

Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more.

For such things in a false disloyal knave

Are tricks of custom, but in a man that's just

They're close dilations, working from the heart

That passion cannot rule.

IAGO For Michael Cassio,

I dare be sworn I think that he is honest.

OTHELLO

I think so too.

IAGO Men should be what they seem;

Or those that be not, would they might seem none!

OTHELLO

Certain, men should be what they seem.

IAGO

Why then, I think Cassio's an honest man.

OTHELLO

Nay, yet there's more in this.

I prithee speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words.

IAGO Good my lord, pardon me:

Though I am bound to every act of duty,
I am not bound to that. All slaves are free -

115 *conceit* fancy or idea (Italian *conceito*, concept) 120 *stops* hesitations, refusals 122 *tricks of custom* tricks of the trade; *just* honest, good 123 *close dilations* secret swellings ("dilate" = expand) of emotion that can't be controlled 127 *seem none* i.e., not pretend to be men but be instead the monsters that they are

Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false,
As where's that palace whereinto foul things
Sometimes intrude not? Who has that breast so pure
But some uncleanly apprehensions
Keep leets and law days, and in sessions sit
With meditations lawful?

OTHELLO

Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago,
If thou but think'st him wronged, and mak'st his ear
A stranger to thy thoughts.

IAGO I do beseech you -

Though I perchance am vicious in my guess
(As I confess it is my nature's plague
To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
Shapes faults that are not) - that your wisdom
From one that so imperfectly conceits
Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble
Out of his scattering and unsure observance.
It were not for your quiet nor your good,
Nor for my manhood, honesty, and wisdom,
To let you know my thoughts.

OTHELLO What dost thou mean?

IAGO

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands.
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

139-41 *uncleanly apprehensions* . . . *lawful* i.e., evil thoughts that do legal business (*leets* = courts) alongside

honorable ideas 147 *jealousy* suspicion 148 *your wisdom* i.e., you 149-50 *From one . . . notice* i.e., wouldn't pay any attention to me, who unreliably conjectures about things 151 *scattering . . . observance* random and unfounded observations 156 *immediate* in-most

OTHELLO

By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts!

IAGO

You cannot, if my heart were in your hand,
Nor shall not whilst 'tis in my custody.

OTHELLO

Ha!

IAGO O, beware, my lord, of jealousy!
It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock
The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;
But O, what damnèd minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts - suspects, yet soundly loves!

OTHELLO

O misery!

IAGO

Poor and content is rich, and rich enough;
But riches fineless is as poor as winter
To him that ever fears he shall be poor.
Good God, the souls of all my tribe defend
From jealousy!

OTHELLO Why, why is this?

Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No! To be once in doubt
Is once to be resolved. Exchange me for a goat
When I shall turn the business of my soul
To such exsufflicate and blowed surmises,
Matching thy inference. 'Tis not to make me jealous
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances;

166-67 *doth mock . . . on* toys with the prey it is about to consume 167-68 *cuckold . . . wronger* i.e., a wronged husband doesn't resent an adulterous wife if he doesn't love her 169 *tells* counts 170 *dotes* loves dotingly; *soundly* profoundly 173 *fineless* unlimited 178 *still* always 180 *resolved* determined to act 182 *exsufflicate and blowed surmises* (1) spat out and flyblown (i.e., disgusting) speculations, (2) inflated and blown abroad (rumored) notions

Where virtue is, these are more virtuous.
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt,
For she had eyes, and chose me. No, Iago;
I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
And on the proof there is no more but this -

Away at once with love or jealousy!

IAGO

I am glad of this; for now I shall have reason
To show the love and duty that I bear you
With franker spirit. Therefore, as I am bound,
Receive it from me. I speak not yet of proof.
Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio;
Wear your eyes thus, not jealous nor secure.
I would not have your free and noble nature,
Out of self-bounty, be abused. Look to't.
I know our country disposition well:
In Venice they do let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.

OTHELLO

Dost thou say so?

IAGO

She did deceive her father, marrying you;
And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks,
She loved them most.

OTHELLO And so she did.

IAGO Why, go to then!

She that, so young, could give out such a seeming
To seel her father's eyes up close as oak -

188 *revolt* turning away (i.e., infidelity) 195 *franker* more candid 198 *secure* overconfident 200 *self-bounty* i.e., your own natural generosity 201 *our country disposition* i.e., the secret habits of Venetian women (indicated in ll. 202-4) 210 *seel* . . . *up* shut; *as oak* (referring to the *close* grain of oak - i.e., completely opaque)

He thought 'twas witchcraft - but I am much to blame.
I humbly do beseech you of your pardon
For too much loving you.

OTHELLO I am bound to thee forever.

IAGO

I see this hath a little dashed your spirits.

OTHELLO

Not a jot, not a jot.

IAGO I' faith, I fear it has.

I hope you will consider what is spoke
Comes from my love. But I do see you're moved.
I am to pray you not to strain my speech
To grosser issues nor to larger reach
Than to suspicion.

OTHELLO

I will not.

IAGO Should you do so, my lord,
My speech should fall into such vile success
Which my thoughts aimed not. Cassio's my worthy
friend -
My lord, I see you're moved.

OTHELLO No, not much moved:
I do not think but Desdemona's honest.

IAGO
Long live she so! and long live you to think so!

OTHELLO
And yet, how nature erring from itself -

IAGO
Ay, there's the point! as (to be bold with you)
Not to affect many proposed matches
Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
Whereto we see in all things nature tends -

217 moved upset 218-19 strain . . . issues constrain me to speak of potentially ugly outcomes 222 vile success
evil result 225 honest (primarily
"chaste," but with the suggestion of "honorable") 229-30 affect . . . degree
care for proposed husbands from her own background

Foh! one may smell in such a will most rank,
Foul disproportions, thoughts unnatural -
But pardon me - I do not in position
Distinctly speak of her; though I may fear
Her will, recoiling to her better judgment,
May fall to match you with her country forms,
And happily repent.

OTHELLO Farewell, farewell!
If more thou dost perceive, let me know more.
Set on thy wife to observe. Leave me, Iago.

IAGO *[Going]*
My lord, I take my leave.

OTHELLO
Why did I marry? This honest creature doubtless
Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds.

IAGO *[Returning]*
My lord, I would I might entreat your honor
To scan this thing no farther: leave it to time.
Although 'tis fit that Cassio have his place,
For sure he fills it up with great ability,

Yet, if you please to hold him off awhile,
 You shall by that perceive him and his means.
 Note if your lady strain his entertainment
 With any strong or vehement importunity;
 Much will be seen in that. In the meantime
 Let me be thought too busy in my fears
 (As worthy cause I have to fear I am)
 And hold her free, I do beseech your honor.

232 *Foh* (expression of disgust); *in such* i.e., in such a headstrong woman; *will* sexual appetite (as elsewhere)
 233 *disproportions* lack of balance 234 *in position* i.e., in proposing this characterization 236 *recoiling*
 yielding 237 *fall . . . forms* i.e., happen to compare you with the Venetian men 238 *happily* perhaps 240 *Set*
on instruct, arrange for 244 *entreat your honor* request you 245 *scan* inspect, consider 250 *strain his*
entertainment i.e., insists on discussing his treatment 251 *importunity* begging, pressure 253 *too busy* i.e., too
 meddlesome 254 *worthy cause* good reason 255 *hold her free* consider her innocent

OTHELLO

Fear not my government.

IAGO

I once more take my leave. *Exit.*

OTHELLO

This fellow's of exceeding honesty,
 And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit
 Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,
 Though that her jesses were my dear heartstrings,
 I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind
 To prey at fortune. Haply, for I am black
 And have not those soft parts of conversation
 That chamberers have, or for I am declined
 Into the vale of years - yet that's not much -
 She's gone. I am abused, and my relief
 Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,
 That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
 And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad
 And live upon the vapor of a dungeon
 Than keep a corner in the thing I love
 For others' uses. Yet 'tis the plague of great ones;
 Prerogativèd are they less than the base.
 'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death.
 Even then this forkèd plague is fated to us
 When we do quicken. Look where she comes.
Enter Desdemona and Emilia.
 If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself!
 I'll not believe't.

256 *government* behavior, self-control 259 *qualities* natures; a *learned spirit* an informed understanding 260
haggard a wild hawk (beginning a metaphor of Desdemona as an uncontrolled bird) 261 *her jesses* the
 leather straps for controlling the hawk 262-63 *whistle . . . fortune* i.e., send her away and let her take care of
 herself 263 *Haply* perhaps 264 *soft . . . conversation* refined manners 265 *chamberers* courtiers 273 *great ones*
 prominent people 274 *Prerogativèd* privileged; *the base* i.e., those of the lower
 class 276 *forkèd plague* curse of being a cuckold (i.e., with horns on the
 forehead) 277 *do quicken* are born

DESDEMONA How now, my dear Othello?
Your dinner, and the generous islanders
By you invited, do attend your presence.

OTHELLO
I am to blame.

DESDEMONA Why do you speak so faintly?
Are you not well?

OTHELLO
I have a pain upon my forehead, here.

DESDEMONA
Faith, that's with watching; 'twill away again.
Let me but bind it hard, within this hour
It will be well.

OTHELLO Your napkin is too little;
[He pushes the handkerchief from him, and it falls unnoticed.]
Let it alone. Come, I'll go in with you.

DESDEMONA
I am very sorry that you are not well.
Exit [with Othello].

EMILIA
I am glad I have found this napkin;
This was her first remembrance from the Moor.
My wayward husband hath a hundred times
Wooped me to steal it; but she so loves the token
(For he conjured her she should ever keep it)
That she reserves it evermore about her
To kiss and talk to. I'll have the work ta'en out
And give't Iago. What he will do with it
Heaven knows, not I;
I nothing but to please his fantasy.
Enter Iago.

280 *generous* noble 285 *watching* staying up late (i.e., sleeplessness) 287 *napkin* handkerchief 288 *Let it alone* i.e., never mind about the headache 294 *conjured her* made her swear (in *conjured* the accent is on the second syllable) 296 *work ta'en out* pattern copied 299 *I nothing . . . fantasy* I do nothing but please his whims

IAGO
How now? What do you here alone?

EMILIA
Do not you chide; I have a thing for you.

IAGO
You have a thing for me? It is a common thing -

EMILIA Ha?

IAGO

To have a foolish wife.

EMILIA

O, is that all? What will you give me now
For that same handkerchief?

IAGO What handkerchief?

EMILIA

What handkerchief!

Why, that the Moor first gave to Desdemona;
That which so often you did bid me steal.

IAGO

Hast stol'n it from her?

EMILIA

No, faith; she let it drop by negligence,
And to th' advantage, I, being here, took't up.
Look, here 'tis.

IAGO A good wench! Give it me.

EMILIA

What will you do with't, that you have been so earnest
To have me filch it?

IAGO Why, what is that to you?

[*Snatches it.*]

EMILIA

If it be not for some purpose of import,
Give't me again. Poor lady, she'll run mad
When she shall lack it.

301 *a thing* an object (but with sexual connotations in the following lines) 302 *common thing* i.e., sexual organ used by everybody 312 *to th' advantage* opportunely 316 *import* great importance

IAGO

Be not acknownd on't; I have use for it.
Go, leave me. *Exit Emilia.*

I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin
And let him find it. Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ. This may do something.
The Moor already changes with my poison:
Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
But with a little act upon the blood
Burn like the mines of sulphur.

Enter Othello. I did say so.

Look where he comes! Not poppy nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,

Shall ever med'cine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou owedst yesterday.

OTHELLO Ha! ha! false to me?

IAGO

Why, how now, general? No more of that!

OTHELLO

Avaunt! be gone! Thou hast set me on the rack.
I swear 'tis better to be much abused
Than but to know't a little.

IAGO How now, my lord?

OTHELLO

What sense had I in her stol'n hours of lust?
I saw't not, thought it not, it harmed not me;
I slept the next night well, fed well, was free and merry;
I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips.

319 *Be* . . . *on't* don't acknowledge it 324 *proofs of holy writ* biblical truth 326 *conceits* ideas, conceptions
327 *at* . . . *distaste* initially aren't perceived to taste bitter 329 *Burn* . . . *sulphur* i.e., are difficult to
extinguish 330 *mandragora* a narcotic 331 *drowsy* soporific, sleep-inducing 332 *med'cine* i.e., help by drugs
333 *owedst* owned, enjoyed 335 *Avaunt* away (a command to a devil); *the rack* an instrument of torture 340
free carefree

He that is robbed, not wanting what is stol'n,
Let him not know't, and he's not robbed at all.

IAGO

I am sorry to hear this.

OTHELLO

I had been happy if the general camp,
Pioners and all, had tasted her sweet body,
So I had nothing known. O, now forever
Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
Farewell the plumèd troops, and the big wars
That makes ambition virtue! O, farewell!
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
And O you mortal engines whose rude throats
Th' immortal Jove's dread clamors counterfeit,
Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!

IAGO

Is't possible, my lord?

OTHELLO

Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore!
Be sure of it; give me the ocular proof;

Or, by the worth of mine eternal soul,
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my waked wrath!

IAGO Is't come to this?

OTHELLO

Make me to see't; or at the least so prove it
That the probation bear no hinge nor loop

342 wanting missing 346 Pioners ditchdiggers, laborers 349 plumèd troops uniformed (plumèd = feathered) soldiers; big wars mighty conflicts 350 makes ambition virtue i.e., that justify the desire for glory 354 circumstance surrounding pageantry 355 mortal engines deadly weapons 355-56 rude . . . counterfeit i.e., noises imitate the thunder (dread clamors) of the heavens 360 ocular visible 365 probation . . . loop i.e., proof allows no loophole

To hang a doubt on - or woe upon thy life!

IAGO

My noble lord -

OTHELLO

If thou dost slander her and torture me,
Never pray more; abandon all remorse;
On horror's head horrors accumulate,
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amazed;
For nothing canst thou to damnation add
Greater than that.

IAGO O grace! O heaven forgive me!

Are you a man? Have you a soul or sense? -

God buy you! take mine office. O wretched fool,

That lov'st to make thine honesty a vice!

O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world,

To be direct and honest is not safe.

I thank you for this profit, and from hence

I'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offense.

OTHELLO

Nay, stay. Thou shouldst be honest.

IAGO

I should be wise; for honesty's a fool

And loses that it works for.

OTHELLO By the world,

I think my wife be honest, and think she is not;

I think that thou art just, and think thou art not.

I'll have some proof. My name, that was as fresh

As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black

As mine own face. If there be cords, or knives,

Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,

375 God buy you (abbreviation for "God be with you" - i.e., "good-bye") 376 That lov'st . . . vice i.e., who

holds so dearly to his honesty as to make it a liability **379** *profit* beneficial insight **380** *sith* since **381** *shouldst be* (1) ought to be, (2) i.e., all right, I believe you are honest **385** *just* upright, honorable **386** *My name* (Q reads "Her name," which is tidier metaphorically) **387** *Dian's visage* the image of Diana, goddess of chastity

I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied!

IAGO

I see you are eaten up with passion:
I do repent me that I put it to you.
You would be satisfied?

OTHELLO Would? Nay, and I will.

IAGO

And may; but how? how satisfied, my lord?
Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on?
Behold her topped?

OTHELLO Death and damnation! O!

IAGO

It were a tedious difficulty, I think,
To bring them to that prospect. Damn them then,
If ever mortal eyes do see them bolster
More than their own! What then? How then?
What shall I say? Where's satisfaction?
It is impossible you should see this,
Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
As salt as wolves in pride, and fools as gross
As ignorance made drunk. But yet, I say,
If imputation and strong circumstances
Which lead directly to the door of truth
Will give you satisfaction, you might have't.

OTHELLO

Give me a living reason she's disloyal.

IAGO

I do not like the office.

390 *satisfied* absolutely certain (with, in the next four lines, sexual undertones) **392** *put it to you* proposed it **395** *supervisor* spectator, one who looks down upon **396** *topped* (a visual image for sexual intercourse; "top" is perhaps a homophone of "tup" [see *tupping* in I.I.88]) **398** *prospect* view, sight to be seen **399** *bolster* couch (i.e., copulate) **403** *prime* sexually eager **404** *salt as wolves in pride* lecherous as wolves in heat; gross indecent, coarse **406** *imputation* charge, accusation; *circumstances* circumstantial evidence **410** *office* task

But sith I am entered in this cause so far,
Pricked to't by foolish honesty and love,
I will go on. I lay with Cassio lately,
And being troubled with a raging tooth,
I could not sleep.
There are a kind of men so loose of soul
That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs.

One of this kind is Cassio.
In sleep I heard him say "Sweet Desdemona,
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves!"
And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
Cry "O sweet creature!" then kiss me hard,
As if he plucked up kisses by the roots
That grew upon my lips, lay his leg o'er my thigh,
And sigh, and kiss, and then cry "Cursèd fate
That gave thee to the Moor."

OTHELLO

O monstrous! monstrous!

IAGO Nay, this was but his dream.

OTHELLO

But this denoted a foregone conclusion:
'Tis a shrewd doubt, though it be but a dream.

IAGO

And this may help to thicken other proofs
That do demonstrate thinly.

OTHELLO I'll tear her all to pieces!

IAGO

Nay, yet be wise. Yet we see nothing done;
She may be honest yet. Tell me but this -
Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief,
Spotted with strawberries, in your wife's hand?

412 *Pricked* spurred (but the obscene meaning of "prick" is also audible) 413 *lay* i.e., shared lodgings (sexual undertones are present here as well) 421 *gripe* grip 428 *foregone conclusion* deed already concluded 429 *shrewd doubt* piercing suspicion 430 *thicken* give substance to

OTHELLO

I gave her such a one; 'twas my first gift.

IAGO

I know not that; but such a handkerchief -
I am sure it was your wife's - did I today
See Cassio wipe his beard with.

OTHELLO If it be that -

IAGO

If it be that, or any that was hers,
It speaks against her with the other proofs.

OTHELLO

O, that the slave had forty thousand lives!
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.
Now do I see 'tis true. Look here, Iago:
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven.
'Tis gone.

Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell!
Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,
For 'tis of aspics' tongues!

IAGO Yet be content.

OTHELLO

O, blood, blood, blood!

IAGO

Patience, I say. Your mind may change.

OTHELLO

Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic Sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,

442 slave i.e., Cassio (the word here means "villain") 448 hearted throne i.e., love sits royally in the heart
449 fraught burden, freight 450 aspics' tongues fangs of asps, venomous snakes 453 Pontic Sea Black Sea

Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up.
[He kneels.] Now, by yond marble heaven,
In the due reverence of a sacred vow
I here engage my words.

IAGO Do not rise yet.

[Iago kneels.]

Witness, you ever-burning lights above,
You elements that clip us round about,
Witness that here Iago doth give up
The execution of his wit, hands, heart
To wronged Othello's service! Let him command,
And to obey shall be in me remorse,
What bloody business ever.

[They rise.]

OTHELLO I greet thy love,
Not with vain thanks but with acceptance bounteous,
And will upon the instant put thee to't.
Within these three days let me hear thee say
That Cassio's not alive.

IAGO

My friend is dead; 'tis done at your request.
But let her live.

OTHELLO

Damn her, lewd minx! O, damn her! damn her!
Come, go with me apart. I will withdraw
To furnish me with some swift means of death
For the fair devil. Now art thou my lieutenant.

IAGO

I am your own forever. *Exeunt.*

459 capable all-embracing, capacious 460 marble i.e., shining or perhaps constant 462 engage pledge, guarantee 464 clip clasp, embrace 466 execution employment, action 468-69 to . . . ever i.e., whatever bloody business I'm required to do I'll perform it in pity of Othello 471 put thee to't i.e., to the test



III.4 Enter Desdemona, Emilia, and Clown.

DESDEMONA Do you know, sirrah, where Lieutenant Cassio lies?

CLOWN I dare not say he lies anywhere.

DESDEMONA Why, man?

CLOWN He's a soldier, and for me to say a soldier lies, 'tis stabbing.

DESDEMONA Go to. Where lodges he?

CLOWN To tell you where he lodges is to tell you where I lie.

DESDEMONA Can anything be made of this?

CLOWN I know not where he lodges; and for me to devise a lodging, and say he lies here or he lies there, were to lie in mine own throat.

DESDEMONA Can you inquire him out, and be edified by report?

CLOWN I will catechize the world for him - that is, make questions, and by them answer.

DESDEMONA Seek him, bid him come hither. Tell him I have moved my lord on his behalf and hope all will be well.

CLOWN To do this is within the compass of man's wit, and therefore I will attempt the doing it. *Exit Clown.*

DESDEMONA

Where should I lose the handkerchief, Emilia?

EMILIA

I know not, madam.

DESDEMONA

Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse

III.4 An area outside the castle 1 sirrah (a form of "sir" used toward social inferiors or servants) 2 lies lives, stays 5-6 'tis stabbing i.e., it puts me in danger 11-12 devise make up 13 lie . . . throat lie deeply or foully 14-15 edified by report i.e., instructed (with religious connotations) by what you hear 16 catechize interrogate, search (playing on Desdemona's religious discourse) 19 moved solicited

Full of crusadoes. And but my noble Moor
Is true of mind, and made of no such baseness
As jealous creatures are, it were enough
To put him to ill thinking.

EMILIA Is he not jealous?

DESDEMONA

Who? he? I think the sun where he was born
Drew all such humors from him.

Enter Othello.

EMILIA Look where he comes.

DESDEMONA

I will not leave him now till Cassio
Be called to him. - How is't with you, my lord?

OTHELLO

Well, my good lady. *[Aside]* O, hardness to dissemble! -
How do you, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA Well, my good lord.

OTHELLO

Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.

DESDEMONA

It hath felt no age nor known no sorrow.

OTHELLO

This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart.
Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires
A sequester from liberty; fasting and prayer,
Much castigation, exercise devout;
For here's a young and sweating devil here
That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good hand,
A frank one.

DESDEMONA You may, indeed, say so;
For 'twas that hand that gave away my heart.

26 crusadoes gold coins (with a figure of the cross, *crux*); And but i.e., if it were not that 31 humors bodily fluids governing temperament 38 argues . . . heart signifies fecundity, sexual abundance, and licentiousness 40 sequester separation 41 castigation holy correction 44 frank free, open (with sexual sense)

OTHELLO

A liberal hand! The hearts of old gave hands,
But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.

DESDEMONA

I cannot speak of this. Come now, your promise!

OTHELLO

What promise, chuck?

DESDEMONA

I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.

OTHELLO

I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me.
Lend me thy handkerchief.

DESDEMONA Here, my lord.

OTHELLO

That which I gave you.

DESDEMONA I have it not about me.

OTHELLO

Not?

DESDEMONA No, faith, my lord.

OTHELLO That's a fault.

That handkerchief

Did an Egyptian to my mother give.

She was a charmer, and could almost read

The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it,

"'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father

Entirely to her love; but if she lost it

Or made a gift of it, my father's eye

Should hold her loathèd, and his spirits should hunt

After new fancies. She, dying, gave it me,

And bid me, when my fate would have me wived,

To give it her. I did so; and take heed on't;

46-47 *The hearts . . . hearts* i.e., in better days people pledged their hearts with their hands, but now, in modern symbols of courtship (*heraldry*), the two no longer go together 49 *chuck* (a term of affection; cf. *wretch*, III.3.90) 51 *salt and sorry rheum* painful running cold 56 *Egyptian* (probably "gypsy") 57 *charmer* sorceress 59 *amiable* desirable 63 *fancies* loves, attractions 65 *her* i.e., the intended bride

Make it a darling like your precious eye.

To lose't or give't away were such perdition

As nothing else could match.

DESDEMONA Is't possible?

OTHELLO

'Tis true. There's magic in the web of it.

A sibyl that had numbered in the world

The sun to course two hundred compasses,

In her prophetic fury sewed the work;

The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk;

And it was dyed in mummy which the skillful

Conserved of maidens' hearts.

DESDEMONA I' faith? Is't true?

OTHELLO

Most veritable. Therefore look to't well.

DESDEMONA

Then would to God that I had never seen't!

OTHELLO Ha! Wherefore?

DESDEMONA

Why do you speak so startingly and rash?

OTHELLO

Is't lost? Is't gone? Speak, is't out o' th' way?

DESDEMONA Heaven bless us!

OTHELLO Say you?

DESDEMONA

It is not lost. But what an if it were?

OTHELLO How?

DESDEMONA

I say it is not lost.

OTHELLO Fetch't, let me see't!

DESDEMONA

Why, so I can, but I will not now.

66 *darling* beloved thing; *eye* (early modern slang for the vagina, a sense that may pertain here) 67 *perdition* loss, disaster 69 *web fabric* 70 *sibyl* prophetess 71 *sun . . . compasses* i.e., two hundred years 74-75 *mummy . . . hearts* a drug distilled (*Conserved*) from mummified bodies, here from *maidens' hearts* 79 *startingly* by starts, fitfully 83 *an if if*

This is a trick to put me from my suit:

Pray you let Cassio be received again.

OTHELLO

Fetch me the handkerchief! My mind misgives.

DESDEMONA

Come, come!

You'll never meet a more sufficient man.

OTHELLO

The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA A man that all his time

Hath founded his good fortunes on your love,

Shared dangers with you -

OTHELLO

The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA

I' faith, you are to blame.

OTHELLO Zounds! *Exit Othello.*

EMILIA Is not this man jealous?

DESDEMONA

I ne'er saw this before.

Sure there's some wonder in this handkerchief;

I am most unhappy in the loss of it.

EMILIA

'Tis not a year or two shows us a man.

They are all but stomachs, and we all but food;

They eat us hungerly, and when they are full,

They belch us.

Enter Iago and Cassio.

Look you - Cassio and my husband!

IAGO

There is no other way; 'tis she must do't.

And lo the happiness! Go and importune her.

87 put me from distract me from *89 misgives* feels doubt or regret *91 sufficient* thoroughly capable *92 all his time* throughout his career *102 'Tis not . . . man* i.e., it takes a long time to know a man's real self (or perhaps "good men don't come along very often") *103 all but* nothing except *107 lo the happiness* i.e., and what luck that she is here; *importune* ask

DESDEMONA

How now, good Cassio? What's the news with you?

CASSIO

Madam, my former suit. I do beseech you

That by your virtuous means I may again

Exist, and be a member of his love

Whom I with all the office of my heart

Entirely honor. I would not be delayed.

If my offense be of such mortal kind

That nor my service past, nor present sorrows,

Nor purposed merit in futurity,

Can ransom me into his love again,

But to know so must be my benefit.

So shall I clothe me in a forced content,

And shut myself up in some other course,

To fortune's alms.

DESDEMONA Alas, thrice-gentle Cassio!

My advocacy is not now in tune.

My lord is not my lord; nor should I know him,

Were he in favor as in humor altered.

So help me every spirit sanctified

As I have spoken for you all my best

And stood within the blank of his displeasure

For my free speech! You must awhile be patient.

What I can do I will; and more I will
Than for myself I dare. Let that suffice you.

IAGO

Is my lord angry?

EMILIA He went hence but now,
And certainly in strange unquietness.

112 *office* devoted service 114 *mortal* i.e., hopeless 118 *But . . . benefit* merely to know it will be helpful 119 *So* in that case; *forced content* necessary contentment (i.e., being resigned to it) 120 *shut myself up in* limit myself to 121 *fortune's alms* the best I can get from fortune 122 *advocation* advocacy 124 *favor* appearance; *humor* mood, temperament 127 *blank* center of a target (also known as the "white")

IAGO

Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon
When it hath blown his ranks into the air
And, like the devil, from his very arm
Puffed his own brother - and is he angry?
Something of moment then. I will go meet him.
There's matter in't indeed if he be angry.

DESDEMONA

I prithee do so. *Exit [Iago].*
Something sure of state,
Either from Venice or some unhatched practice
Made demonstrable here in Cyprus to him,
Hath puddled his clear spirit; and in such cases
Men's natures wrangle with inferior things,
Though great ones are their object. 'Tis even so;
For let our finger ache, and it endues
Our other, healthful members even to a sense
Of pain. Nay, we must think men are not gods,
Nor of them look for such observancy
As fits the bridal. Beshrew me much, Emilia,
I was, unhandsome warrior as I am,
Arraigning his unkindness with my soul;
But now I find I had suborned the witness,
And he's indicted falsely.

EMILIA

Pray heaven it be state matters, as you think,
And no conception nor no jealous toy
Concerning you.

137 *of moment* momentous, significant 139 *of state* having to do with politics 140 *unhatched practice* still-hidden plot 142 *puddled* disturbed, muddled 143-44 *wrangle . . . object* i.e., bicker over or debate about trivia when they are really concerned with major topics 145 *endues* introduces 148- 49 *observancy . . . bridal* i.e., attentiveness expected on the wedding day 149 *Beshrew me* (a mild oath, the equivalent of "I'll be darned") 150 *unhandsome warrior* poor soldier 151 *Arraigning his unkindness* indicting his abnormal (not according to kind) behavior toward me 152 *suborned the witness* bribed the witness (i.e., herself) to lie 155 *conception* fantasy, wild idea; *toy* whim, foolish fancy

DESDEMONA

Alas the day! I never gave him cause.

EMILIA

But jealous souls will not be answered so;
They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they're jealous. It is a monster
Begot upon itself, born on itself.

DESDEMONA

Heaven keep the monster from Othello's mind!

EMILIA Lady, amen.

DESDEMONA

I will go seek him. Cassio, walk hereabout:
If I do find him fit, I'll move your suit
And seek to effect it to my uttermost.

CASSIO

I humbly thank your ladyship.
Exit [Desdemona with Emilia].
Enter Bianca.

BIANCA

Save you, friend Cassio!

CASSIO What make you from home?
How is't with you, my most fair Bianca?
I' faith, sweet love, I was coming to your house.

BIANCA

And I was going to your lodging, Cassio.
What, keep a week away? seven days and nights?
Eightscore eight hours? and lovers' absent hours,
More tedious than the dial eightscore times?
O weary reck'ning!

CASSIO Pardon me, Bianca:

I have this while with leaden thoughts been pressed,
But I shall in a more continue time

157 *Alas the day* (conventional lament - "What a shame") 160 *for* because 161 *Begot upon itself* self-engendered 165 *fit* receptive, fit to listen 168 *Save you* God save you; *What make you from* what are you doing away from 173 *Eightscore eight hours* one hundred sixty-eight hours, the number in a week 174 *dial* clock 177 *more continue* less interrupted, less fretful

Strike off this score of absence. Sweet Bianca,
[Gives her Desdemona's handkerchief.]
Take me this work out.

BIANCA O Cassio, whence came this?
This is some token from a newer friend.
To the felt absence now I feel a cause.
Is't come to this? Well, well.

CASSIO Go to, woman!
Throw your vile guesses in the devil's teeth,
From whence you have them. You are jealous now
That this is from some mistress, some remembrance.
No, by my faith, Bianca.

BIANCA Why, whose is it?

CASSIO
I know not, neither; I found it in my chamber.
I like the work well; ere it be demanded,
As like enough it will, I would have it copied.
Take it and do't, and leave me for this time.

BIANCA
Leave you? Wherefore?

CASSIO
I do attend here on the general
And think it no addition, nor my wish,
To have him see me womaned.

BIANCA Why, I pray you?

CASSIO
Not that I love you not.

BIANCA But that you do not love me!
I pray you bring me on the way a little,
And say if I shall see you soon at night.

CASSIO
'Tis but a little way that I can bring you,

178 *Strike off this score* pay this bill 179 *Take . . . out* copy this embroidery (*work* = needlework) for me
181 *To . . . cause* i.e., I can now explain your absence from me 188 *ere it be demanded* i.e., before somebody
claims it 193 *no addition* no bonus - i.e., not beneficial to my standing 196 *bring me* go along with me

For I attend here, but I'll see you soon.

BIANCA
'Tis very good. I must be circumstanced.
Exeunt omnes.



IV.1 *Enter Othello and Iago.*

IAGO
Will you think so?

OTHELLO Think so, Iago?

IAGO What,

To kiss in private?

OTHELLO An unauthorized kiss.

IAGO

Or to be naked with her friend in bed
An hour or more, not meaning any harm?

OTHELLO

Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm?
It is hypocrisy against the devil.
They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.

IAGO

If they do nothing, 'tis a venial slip.
But if I give my wife a handkerchief -

OTHELLO

What then?

IAGO

Why, then 'tis hers, my lord, and being hers,
She may, I think, bestow't on any man.

OTHELLO

She is protectress of her honor too;

199 attend am waiting 200 circumstanced governed by things as they are; s.d. omnes all IV.1 An area outside Othello's quarters 6 hypocrisy against the devil i.e., apparent evil concealing good (ironic) 7 yet do so i.e., still allow themselves to be naked in bed 9 venial slip minor sin

May she give that?

IAGO

Her honor is an essence that's not seen;
They have it very oft that have it not.
But for the handkerchief -

OTHELLO

By heaven, I would most gladly have forgot it!
Thou said'st - O, it comes o'er my memory
As doth the raven o'er the infectious house,
Boding to all! - he had my handkerchief.

IAGO

Ay, what of that?

OTHELLO That's not so good now.

IAGO What

If I had said I had seen him do you wrong?
Or heard him say - as knaves be such abroad
Who having, by their own importunate suit,
Or voluntary dotage of some mistress,

Convincèd or supplied them, cannot choose
But they must blab -

OTHELLO Hath he said anything?

IAGO

He hath, my lord; but be you well assured,
No more than he'll unswear.

OTHELLO What hath he said?

IAGO

Faith, that he did - I know not what he did.

OTHELLO What? what?

IAGO

Lie -

OTHELLO With her?

IAGO With her, on her; what you will.

17 *They . . . not* many people who seem to have it in fact do not 21 *infectious* plague-ridden 22 *Boding* prophesying (ill) 25 *knaves . . . abroad* there are men around 26-28 *by . . . them* i.e., achieved satisfaction either by insistent wooing or by the irresistible attraction they exert over a woman 34 *what you will* (a conventional phrase - "as you like it" - ending with the sexually charged *will*)

OTHELLO Lie with her? lie on her? - We say lie on her
when they belie her. - Lie with her! Zounds, that's fulsome. - Handkerchief -
confessions - handkerchief ! -

To confess, and be hanged for his labor - first to be
hanged, and then to confess! I tremble at it. Nature
would not invest herself in such shadowing passion
without some instruction. It is not words that shakes
me thus. - Pish! Noses, ears, and lips? Is't possible? -
Confess? - Handkerchief? - O devil!

Falls in a trance.

IAGO Work on,

My medicine works! Thus credulous fools are caught,
And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,
All guiltless, meet reproach. - What, ho! my lord!
My lord, I say! Othello!

Enter Cassio. How now, Cassio?

CASSIO

What's the matter?

IAGO

My lord is fall'n into an epilepsy.
This is his second fit; he had one yesterday.

CASSIO

Rub him about the temples.

IAGO No, forbear.

The lethargy must have his quiet course.

If not, he foams at mouth, and by and by

Breaks out to savage madness. Look, he stirs.

Do you withdraw yourself a little while.

He will recover straight. When he is gone,

I would on great occasion speak with you.

[Exit Cassio.]

36 *belie* slander 36-37 *fulsome* foul 38-39 *To confess . . . confess* ("To confess and be hanged" was a proverbial phrase; Othello uses and then inverts it) 39-41 *Nature . . . instruction* nature wouldn't permit such strong emotion that produces these images (*shadowing passion*) without a basis for it 41 *words* i.e., words only 45 *medicine* (1) poison, (2) medicine 53 *lethargy* state of unconsciousness; *his* its 58 *great occasion* significant matter

How is it, general? Have you not hurt your head?

OTHELLO

Dost thou mock me?

IAGO I mock you not, by heaven.

Would you would bear your fortune like a man!

OTHELLO

A hornèd man's a monster and a beast.

IAGO

There's many a beast then in a populous city,

And many a civil monster.

OTHELLO

Did he confess it?

IAGO Good sir, be a man.

Think every bearded fellow that's but yoked

May draw with you. There's millions now alive

That nightly lie in those unproper beds

Which they dare swear peculiar: your case is better.

O, 'tis the spite of hell, the fiend's arch-mock,

To lip a wanton in a secure couch,

And to suppose her chaste! No, let me know;

And knowing what I am, I know what she shall be.

OTHELLO

O, thou art wise! 'Tis certain.

IAGO Stand you awhile apart;

Confine yourself but in a patient list.

Whilst you were here, o'erwhelmèd with your grief -

A passion most unsuited such a man -

Cassio came hither. I shifted him away

60 *mock me* (Othello reads Iago's *hurt your head*, l. 59, as a joke about cuckoldry, wearing horns; also see l.

62) **64** *civil* civilized, domesticated **66** *yoked* married (but also yoked like an ox; the image introduces a series of puns on marriage, yoking, and horned beasts) **67** *draw* (1) compare, (2) pull a cart **68** *unproper* not exclusively their own **69** *peculiar* theirs alone; *your . . . better* i.e., at least you know **71** *lip . . . couch* kiss a whore in an apparently untainted bed (*secure couch*) **72-73** *No . . . be* i.e., I'd rather know that I'm a cuckold, and then I can take action against her **75** *Confine . . . list* stay within the limits of self-control

And laid good 'scuses upon your ecstasy;
Bade him anon return, and here speak with me;
The which he promised. Do but encave yourself
And mark the fleers, the gibes, and notable scorns
That dwell in every region of his face;
For I will make him tell the tale anew -
Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when
He hath, and is again to cope your wife.
I say, but mark his gesture. Marry, patience!
Or I shall say you're all in all in spleen,
And nothing of a man.

OTHELLO Dost thou hear, Iago?
I will be found most cunning in my patience;
But - dost thou hear? - most bloody.

IAGO That's not amiss;
But yet keep time in all. Will you withdraw?
[*Othello retires.*]

Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,
A huswife that by selling her desires
Buys herself bread and cloth. It is a creature
That dotes on Cassio, as 'tis the strumpet's plague
To beguile many and be beguiled by one.
He, when he hears of her, cannot restrain
From the excess of laughter. Here he comes.
Enter Cassio.

As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad,
And his unbookish jealousy must conster
Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviors
Quite in the wrong. How do you now, lieutenant?

79 *ecstasy* trance (*ec-stasy* = out of one's natural state) **80** *anon* shortly **81** *encave* conceal **82** *fleers* sneers
86 *cope* get together with (in both senses) **88** *all in all in spleen* flooded entirely with choler (the humor of the spleen, seat of passionate anger) **94** *huswife* (not only "hussy" or "prostitute" but also "a woman who manages her household with skill and thrift, a domestic economist" [OED]; see the dispute with Emilia, V.1.123-24) **97** *beguile* enchant, deceive **101** *unbookish* naive; *conster* construe, interpret **102** *light* cheerful, casual

CASSIO
The worser that you give me the addition
Whose want even kills me.

IAGO
Ply Desdemona well, and you are sure on't.
Now, if this suit lay in Bianca's power,
How quickly should you speed!

CASSIO Alas, poor caitiff!

OTHELLO

Look how he laughs already!

IAGO

I never knew a woman love man so.

CASSIO

Alas, poor rogue! I think, i' faith, she loves me.

OTHELLO

Now he denies it faintly, and laughs it out.

IAGO

Do you hear, Cassio?

OTHELLO Now he importunes him

To tell it o'er. Go to! Well said, well said!

IAGO

She gives it out that you shall marry her.

Do you intend it?

CASSIO Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO

Do ye triumph, Roman? Do you triumph?

CASSIO I marry? What, a customer? Prithee bear some charity to my wit; do not think it so unwholesome. Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO So, so, so, so! They laugh that wins!

IAGO Faith, the cry goes that you marry her.

104 addition title, rank 105 want lack 108 speed succeed; caitiff wretch 111 rogue rascal (a term of endearment) 112 denies it faintly i.e., doesn't strenuously object to the suggestion 114 Well said i.e., well done, good work 118 Roman i.e., victor, associated with triumph 119 customer prostitute, one who sells herself 123 cry rumor

CASSIO Prithee say true.

IAGO I am a very villain else.

OTHELLO Have you scored me? Well.

CASSIO This is the monkey's own giving out. She is persuaded I will marry her out of her own love and flattery, not out of my promise.

OTHELLO Iago beckons me; now he begins the story.

CASSIO She was here even now; she haunts me in every place. I was the other day talking on the sea bank with certain Venetians, and thither comes the bauble, and falls me thus about my neck -

OTHELLO Crying "O dear Cassio!" as it were. His gesture imports it.

CASSIO So hangs, and lolls, and weeps upon me; so shakes and pulls me! Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO Now he tells how she plucked him to my chamber. O, I see that nose of yours, but not that dog I shall throw it to.

CASSIO Well, I must leave her company.

Enter Bianca.

IAGO Before me! Look where she comes.

CASSIO 'Tis such another fitchew! marry, a perfumed one. What do you mean by this haunting of me?

BIANCA Let the devil and his dam haunt you! What did you mean by that same handkerchief you gave me even now? I was a fine fool to take it. I must take out the work? A likely piece of work that you should find it in your chamber and know not who left it there! This is some minx's token, and I must take out the work?

126 scored beaten, scored off 130 beckons signals 133 bauble playtoy 140-41 I . . . to (Othello imagines dismembering Cassio; nose could be a euphemism for "penis") 144 such another fitchew just such a (notoriously lecherous) polecat (i.e., prostitute) as we were talking of; perfumed (alluding to the odor of the polecat) 146 dam mother ("devil's dam" was a proverbial phrase) 149 likely piece of work likely story, fiction 151 minx's token present from a whore

There! Give it your hobbyhorse. Wheresoever you had it, I'll take out no work on't.

CASSIO How now, my sweet Bianca? How now? how now?

OTHELLO By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!

BIANCA If you'll come to supper tonight, you may; if you will not, come when you are next prepared for.

Exit.

IAGO After her, after her!

CASSIO Faith, I must; she'll rail in the streets else.

IAGO Will you sup there?

CASSIO Faith, I intend so.

IAGO Well, I may chance to see you; for I would very fain speak with you.

CASSIO Prithce come. Will you?

IAGO Go to! say no more. *[Exit Cassio.]*

OTHELLO *[Comes forward.]* How shall I murder him, Iago?

IAGO Did you perceive how he laughed at his vice?

OTHELLO O Iago!

IAGO And did you see the handkerchief?

OTHELLO Was that mine?

IAGO Yours, by this hand! And to see how he prizes the foolish woman your wife! She gave it him, and he hath given it his whore.

OTHELLO I would have him nine years a-killing! - A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!

IAGO Nay, you must forget that.

OTHELLO Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damned tonight, for she shall not live. No, my heart is turned to stone; I strike it, and it hurts my hand. O, the world hath not a sweeter creature! She might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks.

152 *your hobbyhorse* i.e., to whatever slut gave it to you 156 *should* i.e., must 158 *next prepared for* i.e., the next time you are invited (which will be never) 160 *rail* complain shrewishly 164 *fain* eagerly 168 *vice* i.e., his weakness for women 172 *by this hand* i.e., I swear by this hand; *prizes* values 182 *command him tasks* give him orders

IAGO Nay, that's not your way.

OTHELLO Hang her! I do but say what she is. So delicate with her needle! an admirable musician! O, she will sing the savageness out of a bear! Of so high and plenteous wit and invention -

IAGO She's the worse for all this.

OTHELLO O, a thousand, a thousand times! And then, of so gentle a condition!

IAGO Ay, too gentle.

OTHELLO Nay, that's certain. But yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!

IAGO If you are so fond over her iniquity, give her patent to offend; for if it touch not you, it comes near nobody.

OTHELLO I will chop her into messes! Cuckold me!

IAGO O, 'tis foul in her.

OTHELLO With mine officer!

IAGO That's fouler.

OTHELLO Get me some poison, Iago, this night. I'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again. This night, Iago!

IAGO Do it not with poison. Strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated.

OTHELLO Good, good! The justice of it pleases. Very good!

IAGO And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker: you shall hear more by midnight.

OTHELLO

Excellent good!

[A trumpet.] What trumpet is that same?

187 *invention* imagination 190 *gentle a condition* (1) pleasant temperament, (2) genteel social position 194 *patent* license 195 *touch not you* doesn't concern you 196 *messes* pieces of food suitable for meals (i.e., "to bits") 201 *expostulate* converse, dispute 201-2 *unprovide my mind* i.e., change my determination 207 *his undertaker* (1) one who acts as security for another (i.e., "I'll take care of him"), (2) one who takes up a challenge (probably not yet in the modern sense of funeral director)

IAGO

I warrant something from Venice.

Enter Lodovico, Desdemona, and Attendants.

'Tis Lodovico.

This comes from the duke. See, your wife's with him.

LODOVICO

God save you, worthy general!

OTHELLO With all my heart, sir.

LODOVICO

The duke and the senators of Venice greet you.

[Gives him a letter.]

OTHELLO

I kiss the instrument of their pleasures.

[Opens the letter and reads.]

DESDEMONA

And what's the news, good cousin Lodovico?

IAGO

I am very glad to see you, signor.

Welcome to Cyprus.

LODOVICO

I thank you. How does Lieutenant Cassio?

IAGO Lives, sir.

DESDEMONA

Cousin, there's fall'n between him and my lord

An unkind breach; but you shall make all well.

OTHELLO Are you sure of that?

DESDEMONA My lord?

OTHELLO *[Reads.]* "This fail you not to do, as you will -"

LODOVICO

He did not call; he's busy in the paper.

Is there division 'twixt my lord and Cassio?

DESDEMONA

A most unhappy one. I would do much

210 *warrant* feel sure 212 *With all my heart* (a reciprocal compliment to Lodovico's greeting) 214 *instrument* i.e., letter

T' atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio.

OTHELLO

Fire and brimstone!

DESDEMONA My lord?

OTHELLO Are you wise?

DESDEMONA

What, is he angry?

LODOVICO May be the letter moved him;
For, as I think, they do command him home,
Deputing Cassio in his government.

DESDEMONA

By my troth, I am glad on't.

OTHELLO Indeed?

DESDEMONA My lord?

OTHELLO

I am glad to see you mad.

DESDEMONA Why, sweet Othello?

OTHELLO Devil!

[Strikes her.]

DESDEMONA I have not deserved this.

LODOVICO

My lord, this would not be believed in Venice,
Though I should swear I saw't. 'Tis very much.
Make her amends; she weeps.

OTHELLO O devil, devil!

If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile.
Out of my sight!

DESDEMONA I will not stay to offend you. *[Going]*

LODOVICO

Truly, an obedient lady.

227 atone them reconcile them, make them united ("at one") 231 Deputing
... government i.e., giving Othello's office to Cassio 233 glad ... mad
i.e., I am pleased that you are foolish enough to rejoice in this news (with a
possible pun on "maid") 237 very much i.e., too much, unbelievable 239
teem breed 240 crocodile (notorious for weeping false tears as a means of ensnaring human victims)

I do beseech your lordship call her back.

OTHELLO

Mistress!

DESDEMONA My lord?

OTHELLO What would you with her, sir?

LODOVICO

Who? I, my lord?

OTHELLO

Ay! You did wish that I would make her turn.

Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on

And turn again; and she can weep, sir, weep;

And she's obedient; as you say, obedient,

Very obedient. - Proceed you in your tears. -

Concerning this, sir - O well-painted passion! -

I am commanded home. - Get you away;

I'll send for you anon. - Sir, I obey the mandate

And will return to Venice. - Hence, avaunt!

[Exit Desdemona.]

Cassio shall have my place. And, sir, tonight

I do entreat that we may sup together.

You are welcome, sir, to Cyprus. - Goats and monkeys!

Exit.

LODOVICO

Is this the noble Moor whom our full Senate

Call all in all sufficient? Is this the nature

Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue

The shot of accident nor dart of chance

Could neither graze nor pierce?

IAGO He is much changed.

246 *turn* turn back (but with a multiple pun, repeated in the following lines, on *turn* as [1] change indiscriminately, [2] pursue sexual encounters, as in the modern "turn tricks") 249 *obedient* (Othello twists Lodovico's use of the word in l. 242 to suggest "easy," "yielding" - i.e., sexually pliant) 251 *well-painted passion* artfully counterfeited sorrow 257 *Goats and monkeys* (apparently a muttered reference to the lecherous animals mentioned in III.3.403-4)

LODOVICO

Are his wits safe? Is he not light of brain?

IAGO

He's that he is; I may not breathe my censure.

What he might be - if what he might he is not -

I would to heaven he were!

LODOVICO What, strike his wife?

IAGO

Faith, that was not so well; yet would I knew

That stroke would prove the worst!

LODOVICO Is it his use?
Or did the letters work upon his blood
And new create his fault?

IAGO Alas, alas!
It is not honesty in me to speak
What I have seen and known. You shall observe him,
And his own courses will denote him so
That I may save my speech. Do but go after
And mark how he continues.

LODOVICO
I am sorry that I am deceived in him. *Exeunt.*



IV.2 Enter Othello and Emilia.

OTHELLO
You have seen nothing then?

EMILIA
Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect.

OTHELLO
Yes, you have seen Cassio and she together.

263 safe sound, normal 264 *censure* opinion, judgment 265-66 *What . . . were* i.e., if he's not insane, then he ought to be (to explain this behavior) 268 *use* custom 273 *courses* modes of action IV.2 A room in the castle

EMILIA
But then I saw no harm, and then I heard
Each syllable that breath made up between them.

OTHELLO
What, did they never whisper?

EMILIA Never, my lord.

OTHELLO
Nor send you out o' th' way?

EMILIA Never.

OTHELLO
To fetch her fan, her gloves, her mask, nor nothing?

EMILIA Never, my lord.

OTHELLO That's strange.

EMILIA
I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,
Lay down my soul at stake. If you think other,
Remove your thought; it doth abuse your bosom.

If any wretch have put this in your head,
Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse!
For if she be not honest, chaste, and true,
There's no man happy; the purest of their wives
Is foul as slander.

OTHELLO Bid her come hither. Go. *Exit Emilia.*
She says enough; yet she's a simple bawd
That cannot say as much. This is a subtle whore,
A closet lock and key of villainous secrets;
And yet she'll kneel and pray; I have seen her do't.
Enter Desdemona and Emilia.

DESDEMONA

My lord, what is your will?

12 *durst* would dare 14 *abuse your bosom* deceive your heart 16 *with the serpent's curse* i.e., by making him move eternally on the belly (see Genesis 3:14) 20 *simple bawd* foolish pimp (Othello figures Emilia as a brothel keeper protecting her merchandise, the whore) 21 *This* i.e., Desdemona 22 *closet lock and key* i.e., a closed cabinet 24 *what is your will* (Desdemona's words resemble the greeting of a courtesan seeking to please her client; see note to *wills* at 1.3.321)

OTHELLO Pray you, chuck, come hither.

DESDEMONA

What is your pleasure?

OTHELLO Let me see your eyes.
Look in my face.

DESDEMONA What horrible fancy's this?

OTHELLO [*To Emilia*]
Some of your function, mistress.
Leave procreants alone and shut the door;
Cough or cry hem if anybody come.
Your mystery, your mystery! Nay, dispatch!
Exit Emilia.

DESDEMONA

Upon my knee, what doth your speech import?
I understand a fury in your words,
But not the words.

OTHELLO

Why, what art thou?

DESDEMONA Your wife, my lord, your true And loyal wife.

OTHELLO Come, swear it, damn thyself;
Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves
Should fear to seize thee. Therefore be double-damned -
Swear thou art honest.

DESDEMONA Heaven doth truly know it.

OTHELLO

Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell.

DESDEMONA

To whom, my lord? With whom? How am I false?

OTHELLO

Ah, Desdemon! away! away! away!

27 Some . . . mistress i.e., do your job by leaving us alone and watching the door 28 procreants procreators, copulators 30 mystery trade 36 being . . . heaven looking like an angel as you do 38 honest chaste

DESDEMONA

Alas the heavy day! Why do you weep?

Am I the motive of these tears, my lord?

If haply you my father do suspect

An instrument of this your calling back,

Lay not your blame on me. If you have lost him,

I have lost him too.

OTHELLO Had it pleased heaven

To try me with affliction, had they rained

All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,

Steept me in poverty to the very lips,

Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,

I should have found in some place of my soul

A drop of patience. But, alas, to make me

The fixèd figure for the time of scorn

To point his slow and moving finger at!

Yet could I bear that too; well, very well.

But there where I have garnered up my heart,

Where either I must live or bear no life,

The fountain from the which my current runs

Or else dries up - to be discarded thence,

Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads

To knot and gender in - turn thy complexion there,

Patience, thou young and rose-lipped cherubin!

Ay, here look grim as hell!

DESDEMONA

I hope my noble lord esteems me honest.

OTHELLO

O, ay, as summer flies are in the shambles,

45 An instrument a means 54-55 fixèd . . . at object of ridicule for a scornful age, which is figured as a clock; the dial moves without appearing to (slow and moving finger) 57 garnered up stored, put for safekeeping 59 fountain spring 61 cistern cesspool, filthy sink 62 knot and gender copulate, reproduce 62-64 turn . . . hell i.e., if you, Patience, look on that, your cherubic appearance will become as grim as hell 66 shambles slaughterhouse

That quicken even with blowing. O thou weed,

Who art so lovely fair, and smell'st so sweet,
That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst never
been born!

DESDEMONA

Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?

OTHELLO

Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,
Made to write "whore" upon? What committed?
Committed? O thou public commoner!
I should make very forges of my cheeks
That would to cinders burn up modesty,
Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed?
Heaven stops the nose at it, and the moon winks;
The bawdy wind, that kisses all it meets,
Is hushed within the hollow mine of earth
And will not hear't. What committed?
Impudent strumpet!

DESDEMONA By heaven, you do me wrong!

OTHELLO

Are not you a strumpet?

DESDEMONA No, as I am a Christian!

If to preserve this vessel for my lord
From any other foul unlawful touch
Be not to be a strumpet, I am none.

OTHELLO

What, not a whore?

DESDEMONA No, as I shall be saved!

67 *quicken* . . . *blowing* i.e., that spring to life as soon as they are deposited; *weed* i.e., the wild thing she is, as against, in the next lines, the beautiful flower she appears to be
70 *committed* (Desdemona's neutral sense of the word - i.e., "done" - is corrupted by Othello in ll. 72, 73, 76, and 80 to mean only "commit adultery") **73** *commoner* prostitute, woman used in common **74-75** *forges* . . . *modesty* (an image of blushing) **77** *winks* closes her eyes in shame (the moon symbolizes chastity) **78** *bawdy wind* i.e., indiscriminately lustful, pleasuring everybody **83** *vessel* body

OTHELLO Is't possible?

DESDEMONA

O, heaven forgive us!

OTHELLO I cry you mercy then.

I took you for that cunning whore of Venice
That married with Othello. - [*Calling*] You, mistress,
That have the office opposite to Saint Peter
And keeps the gate of hell!
Enter Emilia. You, you, ay, you!

We have done our course; there's money for your pains:
I pray you turn the key, and keep our counsel. *Exit.*

EMILIA

Alas, what does this gentleman conceive?
How do you, madam? How do you, my good lady?

DESDEMONA Faith, half asleep.

EMILIA

Good madam, what's the matter with my lord?

DESDEMONA With who?

EMILIA Why, with my lord, madam.

DESDEMONA

Who is thy lord?

EMILIA He that is yours, sweet lady.

DESDEMONA

I have none. Do not talk to me, Emilia.
I cannot weep, nor answers have I none
But what should go by water. Prithee tonight
Lay on my bed my wedding sheets - remember -
And call thy husband hither.

EMILIA Here's a change indeed!

Exit.

DESDEMONA

'Tis meet I should be used so, very meet.

88 cry you mercy beg your pardon 91-92 have . . . hell (the brothel keeper, the infernal counterpart of Saint Peter, welcomes men to hell, another term for the female genitalia) 93 done our course finished our business, "had a go" 97 half asleep i.e., dazed 104 go by water be expressed in tears 107 meet proper (referring to Emilia's kindness as opposed to Othello's brutality?)

How have I been behaved, that he might stick
The small'st opinion on my least misuse?
Enter Iago and Emilia.

IAGO

What is your pleasure, madam? How is't with you?

DESDEMONA

I cannot tell. Those that do teach young babes
Do it with gentle means and easy tasks:
He might have chid me so; for, in good faith,
I am a child to chiding.

IAGO What is the matter, lady?

EMILIA

Alas, Iago, my lord hath so bewhored her,
Thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her
That true hearts cannot bear it.

DESDEMONA

Am I that name, Iago?

IAGO What name, fair lady?

DESDEMONA

Such as she said my lord did say I was.

EMILIA

He called her whore. A beggar in his drink
Could not have laid such terms upon his callet.

IAGO

Why did he so?

DESDEMONA

I do not know; I am sure I am none such.

IAGO

Do not weep, do not weep. Alas the day!

EMILIA

Hath she forsook so many noble matches,
Her father and her country, and her friends,

109 *small'st opinion* worst interpretation (i.e., sexual suspicion); *least misuse* slightest misconduct 114 *a child to chiding* unused to being scolded 115 *bewhored her* (1) called her "whore," (2) treated her like a whore 116 *despite* abuse 121 *callet* slut 125 *forsook* refused; *matches* marriages

To be called whore? Would it not make one weep?

DESDEMONA

It is my wretched fortune.

IAGO Beshrew him for't!

How comes this trick upon him?

DESDEMONA Nay, heaven doth know.

EMILIA

I will be hanged if some eternal villain,
Some busy and insinuating rogue,
Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,
Have not devised this slander. I will be hanged else.

IAGO

Fie, there is no such man! It is impossible.

DESDEMONA

If any such there be, heaven pardon him!

EMILIA

A halter pardon him! and hell gnaw his bones!
Why should he call her whore? Who keeps her company?
What place? what time? what form? what likelihood?
The Moor's abused by some most villainous knave,
Some base notorious knave, some scurvy fellow.
O heaven, that such companions thou'dst unfold,
And put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the rascals naked through the world
Even from the east to th' west!

IAGO Speak within door.

EMILIA

O, fie upon them! Some such squire he was
That turned your wit the seamy side without
And made you to suspect me with the Moor.

129 *trick* (1) eccentric behavior, (2) fantasy 130 *eternal* i.e., incorrigible, never-changing 132 *cogging*,
cozening cheating, deceiving 136 *halter* noose 140 *scurvy* disgusting, contemptible 141 *companions* rogues,
base men (like *fellow* in previous line); *unfold* expose 144 *within door* with greater restraint (i.e., not so
loud) 145 *squire* fellow (used contemptuously) 146 *seamy side without* wrong side out

IAGO

You are a fool. Go to.

DESDEMONA Alas, Iago,
What shall I do to win my lord again?
Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven,
I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:
If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love
Either in discourse of thought or actual deed,
Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense
Delighted them in any other form,
Or that I do not yet, and ever did,
And ever will (though he do shake me off
To beggarly divorcement) love him dearly,
Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much,
And his unkindness may defeat my life,
But never taint my love. I cannot say "whore."
It does abhor me now I speak the word;
To do the act that might the addition earn
Not the world's mass of vanity could make me.

IAGO

I pray you be content. 'Tis but his humor.
The business of the state does him offense,
And he does chide with you.

DESDEMONA

If 'twere no other -

IAGO It is but so, I warrant.

[*Trumpets within.*]

Hark how these instruments summon to supper.
The messengers of Venice stays the meat:

152 *will* desire (with explicit sexual meaning; see note to 1.3.321) 153 *discourse of thought* process of thinking 155 *Delighted them* took delight; *form* image, appearance 156 *yet* still, even now 159 *Comfort forswear* let happiness forsake; *Unkindness* unnaturalness (as elsewhere), but also “loss of love” 160 *defeat* destroy 162 *abhor* disgust (with pun on “turn into a whore”) 163 *addition* label (i.e., “whore”) 164 *vanity* temptations, splendor 170 *stays the meat* await their meal

Go in, and weep not. All things shall be well.
Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia.
Enter Roderigo.
How now, Roderigo?

RODERIGO I do not find that thou deal'st justly with me.

IAGO What in the contrary?

RODERIGO Every day thou daff'st me with some device, Iago, and rather, as it seems to me now, keep'st from me all conveniency than suppliest me with the least advantage of hope. I will indeed no longer endure it, nor am I yet persuaded to put up in peace what already I have foolishly suffered.

IAGO Will you hear me, Roderigo?

RODERIGO Faith, I have heard too much; and your words and performances are no kin together.

IAGO You charge me most unjustly.

RODERIGO With nought but truth. I have wasted myself out of my means. The jewels you have had from me to deliver Desdemona would half have corrupted a votarist. You have told me she hath received them, and returned me expectations and comforts of sudden respect and acquaintance; but I find none.

IAGO Well, go to; very well.

RODERIGO Very well! go to! I cannot go to, man; nor 'tis not very well. Nay, I think it is scurvy, and begin to find myself fopped in it.

IAGO Very well.

RODERIGO I tell you 'tis not very well. I will make myself known to Desdemona. If she will return me my jewels, I will give over my suit and repent my unlawful solici-tation;

175 *daff 'st* . . . device put me off (“daff” = “doff,” remove) with some trick 177 *conveniency* advantage, opportunity 188 *votarist* nun 189-90 *sudden respect* immediate attention 192 *cannot go to* (Roderigo turns Iago's cliché [go to] into a sexual phrase - i.e., I can't get anywhere with her) 194 *fopped* made a fool of, duped

if not, assure yourself I will seek satisfaction of you.

IAGO You have said now.

RODERIGO Ay, and said nothing but what I protest intendment of doing.

IAGO Why, now I see there's mettle in thee; and even from this instant do build

on thee a better opinion than ever before. Give me thy hand, Roderigo. Thou hast taken against me a most just exception, but yet I protest I have dealt most directly in thy affair.

RODERIGO It hath not appeared.

IAGO I grant indeed it hath not appeared, and your suspicion is not without wit and judgment. But, Roderigo, if thou hast that in thee indeed which I have greater reason to believe now than ever - I mean purpose, courage, and valor - this night show it. If thou the next night following enjoy not Desdemona, take me from this world with treachery and devise engines for my life.

RODERIGO Well, what is it? Is it within reason and compass?

IAGO Sir, there is especial commission come from Venice to depute Cassio in Othello's place.

RODERIGO Is that true? Why, then Othello and Desdemona return again to Venice.

IAGO O, no; he goes into Mauritania and taketh away with him the fair Desdemona, unless his abode be lingered here by some accident; wherein none can be so determinate as the removing of Cassio.

RODERIGO How do you mean removing him?

199 *satisfaction* i.e., "my money back" or equivalent punishment 204 *mettle* spirit, bravery (with pun on "metal," gold) 208 *directly* straightforwardly 216 *engines* for i.e., weapons to take 218-19 *compass* possibility 224 *Mauritania* a North African realm, home of the Moors 225-26 *abode be lingered here* stay here be extended 227 *determinate* effective

IAGO Why, by making him incapable of Othello's place - knocking out his brains.

RODERIGO And that you would have me to do?

IAGO Ay, if you dare do yourself a profit and a right. He sups tonight with a harlotry, and thither will I go to him. He knows not yet of his honorable fortune. If you will watch his going thence, which I will fashion to fall out between twelve and one, you may take him at your pleasure. I will be near to second your attempt, and he shall fall between us. Come, stand not amazed at it, but go along with me. I will show you such a necessity in his death that you shall think yourself bound to put it on him. It is now high suppertime, and the night grows to waste. About it!

RODERIGO I will hear further reason for this.

IAGO And you shall be satisfied. *Exeunt.*



IV.3 Enter Othello, Lodovico, Desdemona, Emilia, and Attendants.

LODOVICO

I do beseech you, sir, trouble yourself no further.

OTHELLO

O, pardon me; 'twill do me good to walk.

LODOVICO

Madam, good night. I humbly thank your ladyship.

DESDEMONA

Your honor is most welcome.

OTHELLO Will you walk, sir?

O, Desdemona -

DESDEMONA My lord?

233 *harlotry* harlot (i.e., Bianca) 237-38 *he . . . us* i.e., between the two of us, we can take care of him IV.3 A room in the castle

OTHELLO Get you to bed on th' instant; I will be returned forthwith. Dismiss your attendant there. Look't be done.

DESDEMONA I will, my lord.

Exit [Othello, with Lodovico and Attendants].

EMILIA How goes it now? He looks gentler than he did.

DESDEMONA

He says he will return incontinent,
And hath commanded me to go to bed,
And bid me to dismiss you.

EMILIA Dismiss me?

DESDEMONA

It was his bidding; therefore, good Emilia,
Give me my nightly wearing, and adieu.
We must not now displease him.

EMILIA Ay - would you had never seen him!

DESDEMONA

So would not I. My love doth so approve him
That even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns -
Prithee unpin me - have grace and favor.

EMILIA I have laid those sheets you bade me on the bed.

DESDEMONA

All's one. Good faith, how foolish are our minds!
If I do die before thee, prithee shroud me
In one of these same sheets.

EMILIA Come, come! You talk.

DESDEMONA

My mother had a maid called Barbary.

She was in love; and he she loved proved mad
And did forsake her. She had a song of "Willow";
An old thing 'twas; but it expressed her fortune,
And she died singing it. That song tonight

8 forthwith right away 12 incontinent immediately 18 Ay - (so Honigmann; most editions read "I would . . .": in the folio "I" can signify both "I" and "Ay") 20 stubbornness roughness; checks complaints, rebukes 23 All's one it doesn't matter 24 shroud me i.e., wrap my corpse 26 Barbary (variant of "Barbara") 27 mad wild, unsteady

Will not go from my mind; I have much to do
But to go hang my head all at one side
And sing it like poor Barbary. Prithee dispatch.

EMILIA

Shall I go fetch your nightgown?

DESDEMONA No, unpin me here.
This Lodovico is a proper man.

EMILIA A very handsome man.

DESDEMONA He speaks well.

EMILIA I know a lady in Venice would have walked bare-foot to Palestine for a touch of his nether lip.

DESDEMONA [*Sings.*]

"The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow.
The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her
moans;
Sing willow, willow, willow;
Her salt tears fell from her, and softened the stones,
Sing willow, willow, willow."
Lay by these. - "Willow, willow."
Prithee hie thee; he'll come anon.
"Sing all a green willow must be my garland.
Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve" -
Nay, that's not next. Hark! who is't that knocks?

EMILIA It's the wind.

DESDEMONA [*Sings.*]

"I called my love false love, but what said he then?
Sing willow, willow, willow:
If I court more women, you'll couch with more men."
So, get thee gone; good night. Mine eyes do itch.

31-32 I have much to do / But i.e., it's all I can do not 33 Prithee dispatch please hurry 35 proper (1) good-looking, (2) well-behaved 41 willow ("weeping" tree identified with unrequited love) 49 hie thee hurry

Doth that bode weeping?

EMILIA 'Tis neither here nor there.

DESDEMONA

I have heard it said so. O, these men, these men!
Dost thou in conscience think - tell me, Emilia -
That there be women do abuse their husbands
In such gross kind?

EMILIA There be some such, no question.

DESDEMONA

Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

EMILIA

Why, would not you?

DESDEMONA No, by this heavenly light!

EMILIA

Nor I neither by this heavenly light.
I might do't as well i' th' dark.

DESDEMONA

Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

EMILIA The world's a huge thing; it is a great price for a small vice.

DESDEMONA

In troth, I think thou wouldst not.

EMILIA In troth, I think I should; and undo't when I had done. Marry, I would not do such a thing for a joint ring, nor for measures of lawn, nor for gowns, petticoats, nor caps, nor any petty exhibition; but, for all the whole world - 'Ud's pity! who would not make her husband a cuckold to make him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for't.

DESDEMONA

Beshrew me if I would do such a wrong

61 *abuse* mistreat (i.e., betray) 62 *In such gross kind* in this wicked way - i.e., carnally 70 *In troth* by my truth - i.e., faith (a mild oath) 72-73 *joint ring* ring made in two halves 73 *lawn* linen fabric 74 *exhibition* gift 75 'Ud's God's

For the whole world.

EMILIA Why, the wrong is but a wrong i' th' world; and having the world for your labor, 'tis a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right.

DESDEMONA I do not think there is any such woman.

EMILIA Yes, a dozen; and as many to th' vantage as would store the world they played for.
But I do think it is their husbands' faults

If wives do fall. Say that they slack their duties
 And pour our treasures into foreign laps;
 Or else break out in peevish jealousies,
 Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us,
 Or scant our former having in despite -
 Why, we have galls, and though we have some grace,
 Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know
 Their wives have sense like them. They see, and smell,
 And have their palates both for sweet and sour,
 As husbands have. What is it that they do
 When they change us for others? Is it sport?
 I think it is. And doth affection breed it?
 I think it doth. Is't frailty that thus errs?
 It is so too. And have not we affections,
 Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?
 Then let them use us well; else let them know,
 The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

DESDEMONA

Good night, good night. God me such uses send,
 Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend! *Exeunt.*

84 *dozen* (a hyperbolic understatement); *to th' vantage* in addition **85** *store* populate; *played* gambled (with sexual undertone) **88** *foreign* i.e., strangers' **89** *peevish* unreasonable **90** *Throwing restraint upon us* limiting our freedom, locking us up **91** *scant our former having* reduce our allowance **92** *galls* resentment **94** *sense* sensual feelings **98** *affection* passion, lust **104** *uses* behavior, habits **105** *pick* i.e., pick up, learn



V.1 Enter Iago and Roderigo.

IAGO

Here, stand behind this bulk; straight will he come.
 Wear thy good rapier bare, and put it home.
 Quick, quick! Fear nothing; I'll be at thy elbow.
 It makes us, or it mars us - think on that,
 And fix most firm thy resolution.

RODERIGO

Be near at hand; I may miscarry in't.

IAGO

Here, at thy hand. Be bold, and take thy stand.
[Stands aside.]

RODERIGO

I have no great devotion to the deed,
 And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons.
 'Tis but a man gone. Forth my sword! He dies!

IAGO

I have rubbed this young quat almost to the sense,
And he grows angry. Now whether he kill Cassio,
Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
Every way makes my gain. Live Roderigo,
He calls me to a restitution large
Of gold and jewels that I bobbed from him
As gifts to Desdemona.
It must not be. If Cassio do remain,
He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly; and besides, the Moor
May unfold me to him; there stand I in much peril.
No, he must die. But so! I heard him coming.
Enter Cassio.

V.1 A street in Cyprus 1 *bulk* stall-like structure projecting from a shop 11 *quat* boil, pimple; *sense* quick 14
Live Roderigo i.e., if Roderigo lives 16 *bobbed* swindled

RODERIGO
I know his gait. 'Tis he. Villain, thou diest!
[Makes a pass at Cassio.]

CASSIO
That thrust had been mine enemy indeed
But that my coat is better than thou know'st.
I will make proof of thine.
[Draws, and wounds Roderigo.]

RODERIGO O, I am slain!
*[Iago leaps at Cassio from behind,
wounds him in the leg, and exits.]*

CASSIO
I am maimed forever. Help, ho! Murder! murder!
[Falls.]
Enter Othello.

OTHELLO
The voice of Cassio. Iago keeps his word.

RODERIGO
O, villain that I am!

OTHELLO It is even so.

CASSIO
O, help, ho! light! a surgeon!

OTHELLO
'Tis he. O brave Iago, honest and just,
That hast such noble sense of thy friend's wrong!
Thou teachest me. Minion, your dear lies dead,
And your unblest fate hies. Strumpet, I come.
Forth of my heart those charms, thine eyes, are blotted.

Thy bed, lust-stained, shall with lust's blood be spotted. *Exit Othello.*
Enter Lodovico and Gratiano.

CASSIO

What, ho? No watch? No passage? Murder! murder!

25 coat i.e., soldier's undercoat of mail *33 Minion* darling, favorite (here addressed contemptuously to Desdemona) *34 hies* comes quickly *35 Forth of* i.e., out of *37 watch* night watchmen; *passage* traffic, passersby

GRATIANO

'Tis some mischance. The voice is very direful.

CASSIO O, help!

LODOVICO Hark!

RODERIGO O wretched villain!

LODOVICO

Two or three groan. 'Tis heavy night.
These may be counterfeits. Let's think't unsafe
To come into the cry without more help.

RODERIGO

Nobody come? Then shall I bleed to death.

LODOVICO Hark!

Enter Iago [with a light].

GRATIANO

Here's one comes in his shirt, with light and weapons.

IAGO

Who's there? Whose noise is this that cries on murder?

LODOVICO

We do not know.

IAGO Do not you hear a cry?

CASSIO

Here, here! For heaven sake, help me!

IAGO What's the matter?

GRATIANO

This is Othello's ancient, as I take it.

LODOVICO

The same indeed, a very valiant fellow.

IAGO

What are you here that cry so grievously?

CASSIO

Iago? O, I am spoiled, undone by villains!
Give me some help.

IAGO

O me, lieutenant! What villains have done this?

42 heavy dismal, dark *47 shirt* i.e., without his jacket, not fully dressed *48 on* of *54 spoiled* ruined (i.e., injured)

CASSIO

I think that one of them is hereabout
And cannot make away.

IAGO O treacherous villains!

[To Lodovico and Gratiano]

What are you there? Come in, and give some help.

RODERIGO

O, help me there!

CASSIO

That's one of them.

IAGO O murd'rous slave! O villain!

[Stabs Roderigo.]

RODERIGO

O damned Iago! O inhuman dog!

IAGO

Kill men i' th' dark? - Where be these bloody thieves? -

How silent is this town! - Ho! murder! murder! -

What may you be? Are you of good or evil?

LODOVICO

As you shall prove us, praise us.

IAGO Signor Lodovico?

LODOVICO He, sir.

IAGO

I cry you mercy. Here's Cassio hurt by villains.

GRATIANO Cassio?

IAGO How is't, brother?

CASSIO

My leg is cut in two.

IAGO Marry, heaven forbid!

Light, gentlemen. I'll bind it with my shirt.

Enter Bianca.

BIANCA

What is the matter, ho? Who is't that cried?

58 make away escape *66 prove us, praise us* i.e., put us to the test and you'll see (*praise* = appraise)

IAGO

Who is't that cried?

BIANCA

O my dear Cassio! my sweet Cassio!

O Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!

IAGO

O notable strumpet! - Cassio, may you suspect
Who they should be that have thus mangled you?

CASSIO No.

GRATIANO I am sorry to find you thus. I have been to seek you.

IAGO

Lend me a garter. So. - O for a chair
To bear him easily hence!

BIANCA

Alas, he faints! O Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!

IAGO

Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash
To be a party in this injury. -
Patience awhile, good Cassio. - Come, come!
Lend me a light. Know we this face or no?
Alas, my friend and my dear countryman
Roderigo? No. - Yes, sure. - O heaven, Roderigo!

GRATIANO What, of Venice?

IAGO

Even he, sir. Did you know him?

GRATIANO Know him? Ay.

IAGO

Signor Gratiano? I cry your gentle pardon.
These bloody accidents must excuse my manners
That so neglected you.

GRATIANO I am glad to see you.

IAGO

How do you, Cassio? - O, a chair, a chair!

83 garter i.e., for a tourniquet; chair litter (a framework couch for carrying the wounded) 86 trash i.e., Bianca 94 cry beg 95 accidents sudden events

GRATIANO Roderigo?

IAGO

He, he, 'tis he!

[A litter brought in.]

O, that's well said; the chair.

Some good man bear him carefully from hence.

I'll fetch the general's surgeon.

[To Bianca] For you, mistress,

Save you your labor. - He that lies slain here, Cassio,

Was my dear friend. What malice was between you?

CASSIO

None in the world, nor do I know the man.

IAGO *[To Bianca]*

What, look you pale? - O, bear him out o' th' air.

[Cassio and Roderigo are borne off.]

Stay you, good gentlemen. - Look you pale, mistress? -

Do you perceive the gastness of her eye? -

Nay, if you stare, we shall hear more anon.

Behold her well; I pray you look upon her.

Do you see, gentlemen? Nay, guiltiness will speak,

Though tongues were out of use.

[Enter Emilia.]

EMILIA

Alas, what is the matter? What is the matter, husband?

IAGO

Cassio hath here been set on in the dark

By Roderigo, and fellows that are scaped.

He's almost slain, and Roderigo quite dead.

EMILIA

Alas, good gentleman! alas, good Cassio!

IAGO

This is the fruits of whoring. Prithee, Emilia,

Go know of Cassio where he supped tonight.

[To Bianca]

99 *well said* i.e., well done 102 *Save . . . labor* i.e., you needn't fuss about him anymore; leave him alone
107 *gastness* ghastly look, fear

What, do you shake at that?

BIANCA

He supped at my house; but I therefore shake not.

IAGO

O did he so? I charge you go with me.

EMILIA

O, fie upon thee, strumpet!

BIANCA

I am no strumpet, but of life as honest

As you that thus abuse me.

EMILIA As I? Fie upon thee!

IAGO

Kind gentlemen, let's go see poor Cassio dressed.

[To Bianca]

Come, mistress, you must tell's another tale.

Emilia, run you to the citadel

And tell my lord and lady what hath happed.

[Exit Emilia.]

Will you go on afore? *Exeunt [all but Iago].*

This is the night

That either makes me or fordoes me quite. *[Exit.]*



V.2 Enter Othello [with a light], and Desdemona [asleep] in her bed.

OTHELLO

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.

Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!

It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood,

Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,

122 *fie* i.e., shame 123 *honest* chaste 125 *dressed* bandaged 130 *fordoes* destroys, undoes

V.2 A bedroom in the castle 1 *cause* (1) legal matter or "case" (here, the crime of adultery), (2) principle (i.e., not merely a personal grievance); *my soul* (conventional form of self-address)

And smooth as monumental alabaster.

Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.

Put out the light, and then put out the light.

If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,

I can again thy former light restore,

Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,

Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,

I know not where is that Promethean heat

That can thy light relume. When I have plucked thy
rose,

I cannot give it vital growth again;

It needs must wither. I'll smell thee on the tree.

[He kisses her.]

O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade

Justice to break her sword! One more, one more!

Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,

And love thee after. One more, and that's the last!

So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,

But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly;

It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

DESDEMONA

Who's there? Othello?

OTHELLO Ay, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA

Will you come to bed, my lord?

OTHELLO

Have you prayed tonight, Desdemon?

DESDEMONA Ay, my lord.

OTHELLO

If you bethink yourself of any crime

5 *alabaster* alabaster, white marble (the archaic form retained here for its sound) 8 *flaming minister* i.e., the torch or candle that, as *minister* or servant, lights the chamber 11 *Thou . . . nature* i.e., Desdemona (*cunning'st* = beautifully made) 12 *Promethean heat* divine spark (Prometheus legendarily stole fire from heaven) 13 *relume* rekindle 21 *cruel* i.e., unmerciful, but perhaps "painful" or "distressing" 21-22 *sorrow's . . . love* (see Hebrews 12:6, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth") 26 *crime* sin

Unreconciled as yet to heaven and grace,

Solicit for it straight.

DESDEMONA

Alack, my lord, what may you mean by that?

OTHELLO

Well, do it, and be brief; I will walk by.

I would not kill thy unprepared spirit.

No, heavens forfend! I would not kill thy soul.

DESDEMONA

Talk you of killing?

OTHELLO Ay, I do.

DESDEMONA Then heaven

Have mercy on me!

OTHELLO Amen, with all my heart!

DESDEMONA

If you say so, I hope you will not kill me.

OTHELLO Humh.

DESDEMONA

And yet I fear you; for you're fatal then

When your eyes roll so. Why I should fear I know not,

Since guiltiness I know not; but yet I feel I fear.

OTHELLO

Think on thy sins.

DESDEMONA They are loves I bear to you.

OTHELLO

Ay, and for that thou diest.

DESDEMONA

That death's unnatural that kills for loving.
Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame.
These are portents; but yet I hope, I hope,
They do not point on me.

OTHELLO Peace and be still!

28 *Solicit* i.e., pray for forgiveness **32** *forfend* forbid **37** *fatal* ominous, frightening **40**
They . . . you i.e., my only sin is in loving you too much (more than God) **45** *portents*
omens, usually bad **46** *still* quiet

DESDEMONA

I will so. What's the matter?

OTHELLO

That handkerchief which I so loved and gave thee
Thou gav'st to Cassio.

DESDEMONA No, by my life and soul!
Send for the man and ask him.

OTHELLO Sweet soul, take heed,
Take heed of perjury; thou art on thy deathbed.

DESDEMONA

Ay, but not yet to die.

OTHELLO Presently.

Therefore confess thee freely of thy sin,
For to deny each article with oath
Cannot remove nor choke the strong conception
That I do groan withal. Thou art to die.

DESDEMONA

Then Lord have mercy on me!

OTHELLO I say amen.

DESDEMONA

And have you mercy too! I never did
Offend you in my life; never loved Cassio
But with such general warranty of heaven
As I might love. I never gave him token.

OTHELLO

By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in's hand!
O perjured woman! thou dost stone my heart,
And makes me call what I intend to do
A murder, which I thought a sacrifice.
I saw the handkerchief.

DESDEMONA He found it then.

I never gave it him. Send for him hither.

51 *deathbed* (i.e., women were sometimes buried in their wedding sheets) 52 *Presently* right away 55 *conception* belief, or perhaps "plan," "intention," preparing for the metaphor in the next line of aborted childbirth 56 *groan withal* i.e., labor to give birth to (but with the modern sense of "moan in sorrow") 59 *Offend* wrong 63 *stone my heart* i.e., turn it to stone

Let him confess a truth.

OTHELLO He hath confessed.

DESDEMONA

What, my lord?

OTHELLO

That he hath used thee.

DESDEMONA How? unlawfully?

OTHELLO Ay.

DESDEMONA

He will not say so.

OTHELLO No, his mouth is stopped.

Honest Iago hath ta'en order for't.

DESDEMONA

O, my fear interprets. What, is he dead?

OTHELLO

Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge

Had stomach for them all.

DESDEMONA

Alas, he is betrayed, and I undone!

OTHELLO

Out, strumpet! Weep'st thou for him to my face?

DESDEMONA

O, banish me, my lord, but kill me not!

OTHELLO

Down, strumpet!

DESDEMONA

Kill me tomorrow; let me live tonight!

OTHELLO

Nay, if you strive -

DESDEMONA

But half an hour!

OTHELLO Being done, there is no pause.

DESDEMONA

But while I say one prayer!

72 *ta'en order* arranged 73 *interprets* guesses (the worst) 75 *stomach* appetite, desire 81
strive struggle 82 *Being done* i.e., since the case is over

OTHELLO It is too late.

Smother's her.

DESDEMONA O Lord, Lord, Lord!

Emilia at the door.

EMILIA [*Calls within.*]

My lord, my lord! What, ho! my lord, my lord!

OTHELLO

What noise is this? Not dead? not yet quite dead?

I that am cruel am yet merciful;

I would not have thee linger in thy pain.

So, so.

EMILIA *Within*

What, ho! my lord, my lord!

OTHELLO Who's there?

EMILIA [*Within*]

O, good my lord, I would speak a word with you!

OTHELLO

Yes, 'tis Emilia. - By and by. - She's dead. -

'Tis like she comes to speak of Cassio's death.

The noise was high. Ha! no more moving?

Still as the grave. - Shall she come in? Were't good? -

I think she stirs again. No. - What's best to do?

If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife.

My wife! my wife! what wife? I have no wife.

O, insupportable! O heavy hour!

Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse

Of sun and moon, and that th' affrighted globe

Did yawn at alteration.

EMILIA [*Within*] I do beseech you

That I may speak with you, O good my lord!

OTHELLO

I had forgot thee. O, come in, Emilia.

Soft, by and by. - Let me the curtains draw. -

[*Closes the bed curtains.*]

92 *By and by* coming, just a moment (to Emilia) 94 *high* loud 102 *yawn at alteration* split open (in an earthquake) at the change brought on by Desdemona's death

Where art thou?

[*Opens the door.*]

Enter Emilia.

What's the matter with thee now?

EMILIA

O my good lord, yonder's foul murders done!

OTHELLO What? Now?

EMILIA But now, my lord.

OTHELLO

It is the very error of the moon.

She comes more nearer earth than she was wont

And makes men mad.

EMILIA

Cassio, my lord, hath killed a young Venetian

Called Roderigo.

OTHELLO Roderigo killed?

And Cassio killed?

EMILIA No, Cassio is not killed.

OTHELLO

Not Cassio killed? Then murder's out of tune,

And sweet revenge grows harsh.

DESDEMONA

O, falsely, falsely murdered!

EMILIA O Lord! what cry is that?

OTHELLO That? What?

EMILIA

Out and alas! that was my lady's voice.

Help! help, ho! help! O lady, speak again!

Sweet Desdemona! O sweet mistress, speak!

DESDEMONA

A guiltless death I die.

EMILIA

O, who hath done this deed?

109 *But* just 110 *error* wandering, errancy, with dire earthly consequences 111 *was*
wont was formerly accustomed to do

DESDEMONA

Nobody - I myself. Farewell.

Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell!

[She dies.]

OTHELLO

Why, how should she be murdered?

EMILIA Alas, who knows?

OTHELLO

You heard her say herself, it was not I.

EMILIA

She said so. I must needs report the truth.

OTHELLO

She's like a liar gone to burning hell!

'Twas I that killed her.

EMILIA O, the more angel she,

And you the blacker devil!

OTHELLO

She turned to folly, and she was a whore.

EMILIA

Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil.

OTHELLO

She was false as water.

EMILIA Thou art rash as fire to say

That she was false. O, she was heavenly true!

OTHELLO

Cassio did top her. Ask thy husband else.

O, I were damned beneath all depth in hell

But that I did proceed upon just grounds

To this extremity. Thy husband knew it all.

EMILIA My husband?

OTHELLO Thy husband.

EMILIA

That she was false to wedlock?

126 *Commend* remember, speak of 135 *water* (considered unstable or changing) 137 *top* (see *tupping*, 1.1.88); *else* i.e., if you want to know more (*else*) 139 *But that . . . grounds* i.e., if I had acted without justification

OTHELLO

Ay, with Cassio. Had she been true,

If heaven would make me such another world

Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,

I'd not have sold her for it.

EMILIA

My husband?

OTHELLO Ay, 'twas he that told me on her first.

An honest man he is, and hates the slime

That sticks on filthy deeds.

EMILIA My husband?

OTHELLO

What needs this iterance, woman? I say thy husband.

EMILIA

O mistress, villainy hath made mocks with love!

My husband say she was false?

OTHELLO He, woman.

I say, thy husband. Dost understand the word?

My friend, thy husband; honest, honest Iago.

EMILIA

If he say so, may his pernicious soul

Rot half a grain a day! he lies to th' heart.

She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.

OTHELLO Ha!

EMILIA Do thy worst.

This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven

Than thou wast worthy her.

OTHELLO Peace, you were best.

EMILIA

Thou hast not half that power to do me harm

As I have to be hurt. O gull! O dolt!

As ignorant as dirt! thou has done a deed -

145 *such another world* i.e., another world like this one 146 *chrysolite* precious gem 151 *iterance* repetition
152 *made mocks with* played games with 157 *half a grain a day* i.e., slowly and painfully 158 *fond* . . .
bargain i.e., devoted to her vows to you 164 *to be hurt* to endure pain; *gull* (common word for a dupe,
someone easy to cheat)

I care not for thy sword; I'll make thee known,

Though I lost twenty lives. Help! help! ho! help!

The Moor hath killed my mistress! Murder! murder!

Enter Montano, Gratiano, and Iago [with others].

MONTANO

What is the matter? How now, general?

EMILIA

O, are you come, Iago? You have done well,

That men must lay their murders on your neck.

GRATIANO

What is the matter?

EMILIA

Disprove this villain, if thou be'st a man.

He says thou told'st him that his wife was false.

I know thou didst not; thou'rt not such a villain.

Speak, for my heart is full.

IAGO

I told him what I thought, and told no more
Than what he found himself was apt and true.

EMILIA

But did you ever tell him she was false?

IAGO I did.

EMILIA

You told a lie, an odious damnèd lie!
Upon my soul, a lie! a wicked lie!
She false with Cassio? Did you say with Cassio?

IAGO

With Cassio, mistress. Go to, charm your tongue.

EMILIA

I will not charm my tongue; I am bound to speak:
My mistress here lies murdered in her bed -

ALL

O heavens forfend!

171 *lay* . . . *neck* charge you with murder 184 *charm* cast a spell on (i.e., silence)

EMILIA

And your reports have set the murder on.

OTHELLO

Nay, stare not, masters. It is true indeed.

GRATIANO

'Tis a strange truth.

MONTANO

O monstrous act!

EMILIA Villainy, villainy, villainy!

I think upon't - I think I smell't! - O villainy!

I thought so then. - I'll kill myself for grief. -

O villainy, villainy!

IAGO

What, are you mad? I charge you get you home.

EMILIA

Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak.

'Tis proper I obey him, but not now.

Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home.

OTHELLO

O! O! O!

[Falls on the bed.]

EMILIA Nay, lay thee down and roar!

For thou hast killed the sweetest innocent

That e'er did lift up eye.

OTHELLO O, she was foul!

[Rises.]

I scarce did know you, uncle. There lies your niece,
Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopped.
I know this act shows horrible and grim.

GRATIANO

Poor Desdemon! I am glad thy father's dead.
Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief
Shore his old thread in twain. Did he live now,
This sight would make him do a desperate turn,

201 *lift up eye* i.e., to heaven in prayer 204 *shows* appears 207 *Shore* cut 208 *turn* act

Yea, curse his better angel from his side,
And fall to reprobance.

OTHELLO

'Tis pitiful; but yet Iago knows
That she with Cassio hath the act of shame
A thousand times committed. Cassio confessed it,
And she did gratify his amorous works
With that recognizance and pledge of love
Which I first gave her. I saw it in his hand.
It was a handkerchief, an antique token
My father gave my mother.

EMILIA

O God! O heavenly God!

IAGO

Zounds, hold your peace!

EMILIA 'Twill out, 'twill out! I peace?
No, I will speak as liberal as the north.
Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,
All, all, cry shame against me, yet I'll speak.

IAGO

Be wise, and get you home.

EMILIA I will not.

[Iago draws and threatens Emilia.]

GRATIANO Fie!

Your sword upon a woman?

EMILIA

O thou dull Moor, that handkerchief thou speak'st of
I found by fortune, and did give my husband;
For often with a solemn earnestness -

More than indeed belonged to such a trifle -
He begged of me to steal't.

IAGO Villainous whore!

210 *reprobance* the state of rejection by God 214 *gratify* . . . *works* reward his sexual acts
215 *recognizance* token 221 *as liberal as the north* as freely as the north wind blows

EMILIA

She give it Cassio? No, alas, I found it,
And I did give't my husband.

IAGO Filth, thou liest!

EMILIA

By heaven, I do not, I do not, gentlemen.
O murd'rous coxcomb! what should such a fool
Do with so good a wife?

OTHELLO Are there no stones in heaven
But what serves for the thunder? Precious villain!
*[The Moor runs at Iago but is disarmed.
Iago stabs his wife.]*

GRATIANO

The woman falls. Sure he hath killed his wife.

EMILIA

Ay, ay. O, lay me by my mistress' side. *[Exit Iago.]*

GRATIANO

He's gone, but his wife's killed.

MONTANO

'Tis a notorious villain. Take you this weapon,
Which I have here recovered from the Moor.
Come, guard the door without. Let him not pass,
But kill him rather. I'll after that same villain,
For 'tis a damnèd slave.
Exit [Montano, with all but Othello and Emilia].

OTHELLO I am not valiant neither;
But every puny whipster gets my sword.
But why should honor outlive honesty?
Let it go all.

EMILIA What did thy song bode, lady?

234 *coxcomb* jester, fool (i.e., Othello) 235-36 *Are there . . . the thunder* i.e., why doesn't heaven rain down stones on this villain 236 *Precious* utter 240 *a notorious* an extraordinary, incredible (i.e., not the modern "well-known") 245 *puny whipster* foolish, insignificant person (cf. whippersnapper) 246 *honor* i.e., military achievement; *honesty* chastity

Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan,
And die in music. *[Sings.]* "Willow, willow, willow."

Moor, she was chaste. She loved thee, cruel Moor:
So come my soul to bliss as I speak true.
So speaking as I think, alas, I die.
[She dies.]

OTHELLO

I have another weapon in this chamber;
It was a sword of Spain, the ice brook's temper.
O, here it is. - Uncle, I must come forth.

GRATIANO *[Within]*

If thou attempt it, it will cost thee dear.
Thou hast no weapon, and perforce must suffer.

OTHELLO

Look in upon me then and speak with me,
Or, naked as I am, I will assault thee.
[Enter Gratiano.]

GRATIANO

What is the matter?

OTHELLO Behold, I have a weapon;
A better never did itself sustain
Upon a soldier's thigh. I have seen the day
That with this little arm and this good sword
I have made my way through more impediments
Than twenty times your stop. But O vain boast!
Who can control his fate? 'Tis not so now.
Be not afraid, though you do see me weaponed.
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt
And very seamark of my utmost sail:
Do you go back dismayed? 'Tis a lost fear.
Man but a rush against Othello's breast

248-49 *swan* . . . *music* (according to legend, the ordinarily mute swan sang beautifully just before death)
254 *sword* . . . *temper* i.e., Spanish sword hardened or tempered in freezing water 259 *naked* unarmed 265
your stop i.e., the obstacle you impose 268 *butt* target (from archery) 269 *seamark* . . . *sail* beacon or
destination of my last voyage 270 *lost* wasted 271 *Man but a rush* i.e., use only a reed

And he retires. Where should Othello go?
Now, how dost thou look now? O ill-starred wench!
Pale as thy smock! When we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl?
Even like thy chastity.
O cursèd, cursèd slave! Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!
Oh Desdemon! dead Desdemon! dead! Oh! Oh!
Enter Lodovico, Cassio [in a litter], Montano, and

Iago, with Officers.

LODOVICO

Where is this rash and most unfortunate man?

OTHELLO

That's he that was Othello. Here I am.

LODOVICO

Where is that viper? Bring the villain forth.

OTHELLO

I look down towards his feet - but that's a fable.

If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee.

[Wounds Iago.]

LODOVICO

Wrench his sword from him.

[Othello is disarmed.]

IAGO I bleed, sir, but not killed.

OTHELLO

I am not sorry neither. I'd have thee live,

For in my sense, 'tis happiness to die.

LODOVICO

O thou Othello that was once so good,

Fall'n in the practice of a damnèd slave,

272 *retires* withdraws, retreats (a military term) 274 *compt* i.e., final accounting (Last Judgment) 286 *I . . . fable* (Othello inspects Iago's feet to test the legend that the devil's feet are cloven) 292 *practice* plot

What shall be said to thee?

OTHELLO Why, anything:

An honorable murderer, if you will;

For nought I did in hate, but all in honor.

LODOVICO

This wretch hath part confessed his villainy.

Did you and he consent in Cassio's death?

OTHELLO Ay.

CASSIO

Dear general, I never gave you cause.

OTHELLO

I do believe it, and I ask your pardon.

Will you, I pray, demand that demidevil

Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?

IAGO

Demand me nothing. What you know, you know.

From this time forth I never will speak word.

LODOVICO

What, not to pray?

GRATIANO Torments will ope your lips.

OTHELLO

Well, thou dost best.

LODOVICO

Sir, you shall understand what hath befall'n,
Which, as I think, you know not. Here is a letter
Found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo,
And here another. The one of them imports
The death of Cassio to be undertook
By Roderigo.

OTHELLO

O villain!

CASSIO Most heathenish and most gross!

LODOVICO

Now here's another discontented paper

297 consent in agree (in planning) 301 demidevil half demon, almost a devil 313 gross monstrous

Found in his pocket too, and this, it seems,
Roderigo meant t' have sent this damnèd villain;
But that, belike, Iago in the interim
Came in and satisfied him.

OTHELLO O thou pernicious caitiff ! -

How came you, Cassio, by that handkerchief
That was my wife's?

CASSIO I found it in my chamber;
And he himself confessed it but even now
That there he dropped it for a special purpose
Which wrought to his desire.

OTHELLO O fool! fool! fool!

CASSIO

There is besides in Roderigo's letter,
How he upbraids Iago that he made him
Brave me upon the watch, whereon it came
That I was cast; and even but now he spake,
After long seeming dead - Iago hurt him,
Iago set him on.

LODOVICO

You must forsake this room and go with us.

Your power and your command is taken off,
And Cassio rules in Cyprus. For this slave,
If there be any cunning cruelty
That can torment him much and hold him long,
It shall be his. You shall close prisoner rest
Till that the nature of your fault be known
To the Venetian state. Come, bring away.

OTHELLO

Soft you! a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know't.
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,

318 *caitiff* villain 326 *Brave* defy, challenge 327 *cast* dismissed 334 *hold him long* i.e., keep him alive through torture 335 *close prisoner rest* i.e., remain closely guarded, confined 338 *Soft you* one moment, wait

When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Judean, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unuseèd to the melting mood,
Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinable gum. Set you down this.
And say besides that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by th' throat the circumcised
And smote him - thus.

[He stabs himself.]

LODOVICO

O bloody period!

GRATIANO All that is spoke is marred.

OTHELLO

I kissed thee ere I killed thee. No way but this,
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.

[He] dies.

CASSIO

This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon;
For he was great of heart.

LODOVICO *[To Iago]* O Spartan dog,
More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea!
Look on the tragic loading of this bed.

341 *unlucky* unfortunate 342 *extenuate* soft-pedal (literally, "thin out") 345 *wrought* worked up, worked on

346 *Perplexed* desperate, bewildered **347** *base Judean* (perhaps Judas Iscariot, betrayer of Christ, or Herod, who impulsively killed his wife; Q reads "Indian") **348** *subdued* conquered, overcome with grief **351** *gum* i.e., myrrh **354** *traduced* betrayed **357** *period* ending **361** *Spartan dog* (bloodhound known for silence) **362** *fell* merciless, inhuman

This is thy work. The object poisons sight;
Let it be hid. Gratiano, keep the house,
And seize upon the fortunes of the Moor,
For they succeed on you. To you, lord governor,
Remains the censure of this hellish villain,
The time, the place, the torture. O, enforce it!
Myself will straight aboard, and to the state
This heavy act with heavy heart relate. *Exeunt.*

365 *Let it be hid* i.e., draw the bed curtains; *keep* guard **366** *seize upon* take legal control of **367** *succeed on* pass to you (as Desdemona's uncle) by inheritance **368** *censure* judgment, passing sentence

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1

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2

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5

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